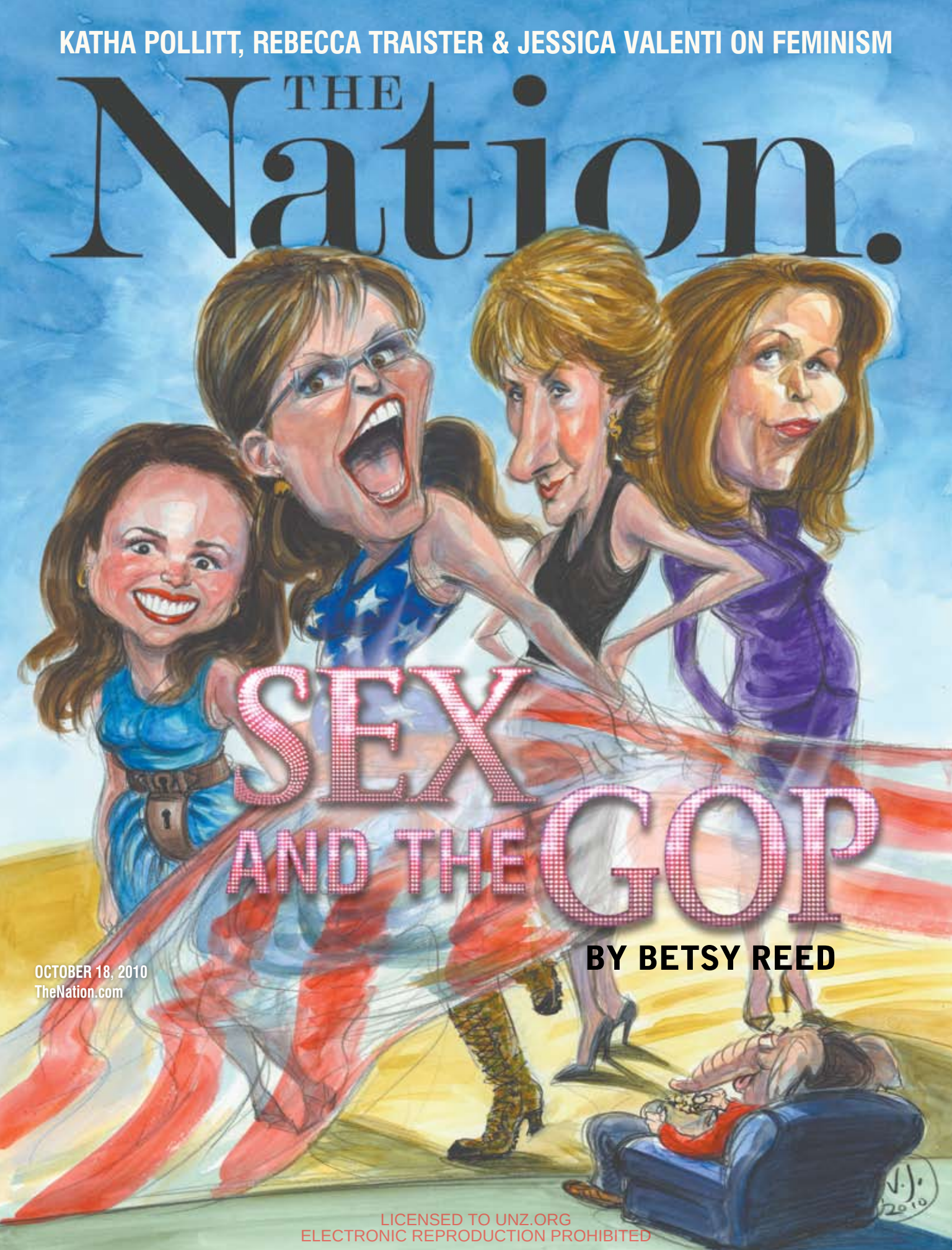
KATHA POLLITT, REBECCA TRAISTER & JESSICA VALENTI ON FEMINISM

THE Nation.



SEX AND THE GOP

BY BETSY REED

OCTOBER 18, 2010
TheNation.com

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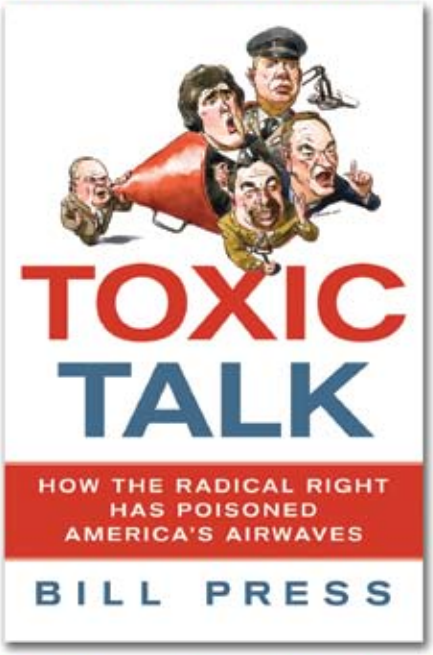
"THE BOOK MICHAEL SAVAGE DOESN'T WANT YOU TO READ!"



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Letters

Heckuva Job, Becky!

Iowa City
Rebecca Solnit has done an excellent job of putting the coverage of Katrina in context in "Reconstructing the Story of the Storm: Hurricane Katrina at Five" [Sept. 13]. When Katrina hit, I was working at a newspaper sixteen hours from the gulf. Our news staff was debating who would drive down to find stories—of pillage, devastation, conflict, anything—to resonate with our Midwestern audience. We were after the same stories as other reporters: pain, misery, racism, destruction. Five years later, we see the stories we and the rest of the media missed.

There are cultural explanations for why media didn't cover what Solnit wanted them to. The way media understand themselves and how audiences understand media are to blame. These are the immeasurable cultural aspects of news work; they create familiar narratives based on myth; they resonate with the mass audience and the interpretive community, journalists. The story of Katrina uses collective memory—how we remember or wish to remember. And collective memory, in turn, fuels the myths and narratives that we saw in news coverage: poor blacks, the hungry, the marginalized, the flooded and destroyed. All the images look the same.

Analysis of news that misses the cultural element of how and why that news was produced limits what we should have learned. Assessments of news coverage must go deeper to seek out the roots that reach into fiction, myth and narrative and resonate with values. If the cultural explanations aren't explored, what we could have learned from Katrina ends with Katrina.
Robert Gutsche Jr.

Green or Gassy, Cars Gotta Go

San Francisco
A half-dozen letters responded to "Freedom From Oil" [Aug. 2/9] with conventional and constructive suggestions (plus battery-operated clothing) ["Letters," Sept. 27]. Certainly, green cars should be encouraged. There is a problem, however, with the exponential growth of that twentieth-century invention that saved us from the health hazards of horseshit. That sixty-mile traffic jam in China: well, I anticipated that an event—could be on the I-95, or in Tehran, Bangkok or on any of hundreds of autoways—would draw attention to the dysfunctional symbiosis that we, the weak bipeds, the keepers/attendants, have with those stronger, carapaced creatures. That dominant species demands ever more buildings and smoothed surfaces to accommodate its rising population. We, the auto deluded, are being colonized.
Jerry Bronk

Anchor Babies Aweigh!

Rhinebeck, N.Y.
Right-wing hysteria over "anchor babies" is absurd, but the Fourteenth Amendment is becoming more and more anomalous [Robin Templeton, "Baby Baiting," Aug. 16/23]. The amendment, the intention of which was to grant citizenship to freed slaves, is out-of-date and outmoded. The right of citizenship to all those born on US soil is unique to our country. I hope the furor from the left over right-wing efforts to repeal it is a feint.

The anti-immigrationists' obsession with the amendment does, however, present progressives with a marvelous opportunity to negotiate immigration reform. Repeal of the amendment, if not retroactive, will cause little hardship. Meanwhile, a quid pro quo could be reforms such as a fast track to citizenship for established and productive "illegals." Repeal could be a win-win situation for immigrants.
Samuel Reifler

Princeton, N.J.
I've been studying Mexican immigration for thirty years and have interviewed tens of thousands of current, past and prospective illegal migrants; in all that time no one has ever said they wanted to come to the

(continued on page 26)

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Just Say Yes to Prop 19

California progressives have plenty of reasons to go to the polls on November 2. In the governor's race, Democrat Jerry Brown is locked in a dead heat with corporatist zealot Meg Whitman. Longtime reformer Barbara Boxer is battling Palin favorite Carly Fiorina for her Senate seat. And climate change deniers, in league with out-of-state oil companies, are gunning for a proposition to suspend a landmark greenhouse gas emissions law.

EDITORIAL

But Golden State voters who aren't satisfied with merely beating back GOP challenges can take heart in the chance to support Proposition 19. The ballot initiative would make it legal for Californians over 21 to possess and cultivate marijuana for personal use, and would authorize local governments to regulate and tax commercial production and sales. Its passage would signal a major victory in the war against the "war on drugs."

The case for Prop 19 can be made with just a few stats. Between 1999 and 2009, nearly 570,000 residents were arrested for misdemeanor pot possession (plus another 155,000 who faced more serious felony charges). Harvard economist Jeffrey Miron, a prominent libertarian, estimates the annual cost of enforcing prohibition in California at $1.87 billion. But for all the time and resources the state has pumped into targeting these nonviolent, low-level offenders, there has been no corresponding drop in reported use.

There has, though, been a spike in racial disparities. Black adults across the state are arrested for pot possession at higher rates than whites—sometimes by a factor of three or four. The same ugly imbalances apply to black youth, even though their white peers are more likely to inhale. Pot arrests in California don't often lead to prison, but the long-term consequences of a criminal record are severe and disproportionately burdensome to minorities.

Legalization would not just help balance the scales. It would also help balance the budget. The state, which is facing a $19 billion shortfall—crippling its ability to provide adequate funding for education, childcare and other social services—can ill afford to waste so much money on a failed campaign. But it can surely benefit from a regulated cannabis market; experts estimate that the state could capture $1.4 billion a year in taxes and fees.

To put it plainly, a vote for Prop 19 is a vote for a more sensible drug policy. Establishing a market for pot would free up resources to fund treatment programs for addicts and would allow cops and prosecutors to redirect their focus to more serious criminals—while dealing a sharp blow to the Mexican cartels, which depend heavily on illicit trade in California.

As the election nears, some unusual coalitions are competing to get out the vote. Top candidates from both parties are aligned with moral scolds, prominent law enforcement associations and groups (notably, beer distributors) that have a financial stake in keeping pot illegal. They warn that Prop 19 will unleash a flurry of lawsuits, put the workforce in a permanent and dangerous haze and give kids a free pass to toke up. But recent polls give a slight advantage to the other side: a loose alliance of libertarians and progressives, civil rights advocates, other law enforcement groups, unions and young activists.

Californians have proven the fearmongers wrong before: the legislature decriminalized cannabis in 1975, and voters allowed it for medical use in 1996. If it seems like the whole nation is watching to see if they will do so again this fall, that's because Prop 19 can set a national example for how to wind down the drug war. And we all have a stake in that.

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ON THE COVER: FROM LEFT, CHRISTINE O'DONNELL, SARAH PALIN, CARLY FIORINA AND MICHELE BACHMANN. COVER ILLUSTRATION BY VICTOR JUHASZ, DESIGN BY GENE CASE & STEPHEN KLING/AVENGING ANGELS; ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETER O. ZIERLEIN

VOLUME 291, NUMBER 16, OCTOBER 18, 2010
PRINTED SEPTEMBER 29

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INTERNET: Selections from the current issue become available Thursday night at www.thenation.com.

Printed on 100% recycled 40% post-consumer acid- and chlorine-free paper, in the USA.

Unmasking the GOP Pledge

Political mythology—a more powerful force than political reality—holds that former House Speaker Newt Gingrich's "Contract With America" captured the imagination of the electorate in 1994 and swept Republicans into control of Congress for the first time in forty years. But after the election, polling showed most Americans to be unaware of the specifics of that supposedly definitional document. Contracts and pledges from the parties in midterm elections are not about ideas. They're tactics, drawn up to give coherence to a campaign so candidates can say, "We're not the 'Party of No.' We stand for something." The point is to nationalize a campaign—in the eyes of the media and key voters—to legitimize and benefit the challengers.

COMMENT

That explains why the "Pledge to America" by the House Republican Caucus cannot be ignored. The biggest mistake Democrats made sixteen years ago was their failure to reveal the Contract With America for what it was—an outline for the special-interest takeover of the legislative process—and to turn it against the GOP. President Bill Clinton admits he lost control of the debate in 1994. Now, in another election cycle that sees dispirited Democrats struggling to explain that they really have accomplished things while in control of the White House and Congress, the Democratic response should be more tactically and ideologically sophisticated. But to do this, President Obama and Congressional Democrats must recognize the pledge for what it is not—and for what it is.

The Republican proposal is not a Tea Party plan. Aside from some cursory references to the Constitution and a promise to "immediately reduce spending" by cutting off the stimulus funds, which have already been allocated (presumably in many cases to the districts of the very Representatives who promise to slash them—fat chance), the pledge reads as if written by lobbyists. Perhaps that's because its drafting *was* organized by a lobbyist: Brian Wild, former aide to Vice President Cheney. Wild toiled for the US Chamber of Commerce before joining a powerful GOP-linked firm, the Nickles Group. There he earned his keep promoting the interests of oil giants like ExxonMobil and Anadarko Petroleum, pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and, ironically, scandal-plagued insurance giant AIG—one of the first and most expensive recipients of the bailouts Tea Partisans so decry.

Wild and his drafting team produced nearly 8,000 words of DC-insider "compromises and milquetoast rhetorical flourishes in search of unanimity"—to borrow a description from conservative commentator and Tea Party ally Erick Erickson, who dismissed the pledge as "pablum" that "will actually do nothing but keep making Washington fatter before we crash from the sugar high." Even more damning is the assessment from business bible *Forbes*: it argues that the pledge to maintain Bush-era tax cuts for the rich—at a cost of $3 trillion over the coming decade—when weighed against proposed domestic spending cuts, "would result in long-term deficits far higher than if Congress merely maintained the status quo for the next two years."

The smart Democratic response is not to pull out the abacus and try to out-deficit-wonk the deficit wonks. It's enough to label

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Noted.

LABOUR LED BY ED: "Iraq was an issue that divided our party and our country.... I criticize nobody faced with making the toughest of decisions, and I honor our troops who fought and died there. But I do believe that we were wrong." With those words to the Labour Party Conference, **Ed Miliband** announced the arrival of a new generation in British politics. Elected by a wafer-thin margin over his older brother, **David**—who voted for the war as an MP and as foreign secretary fought efforts to expose British complicity in torture—Ed urged his party to be "humble about our past." The former *Nation* intern now faces a triple challenge: to introduce himself to the country at large, to heal the wounds of a hard-fought leadership contest and to revive a party that has lost 5 million voters since 1997 and that still bears the scars—and the grudges—of a decade of infighting between supporters of rivals **Tony Blair** and **Gordon Brown**.

He began with the saga of his parents—two Jewish refugees who arrived in Britain "with nothing. This country gave them everything." They taught him to "never walk by on the other side of injustice." And he ended with a slightly awkward echo of a political brother act from another time and place: "Let the message go out—a new generation has taken charge of Labour." He wants "a grown-up debate" about "the kind of country we leave for our kids."

Will he succeed? Opinion polls showed Labour ahead of the Conservatives for the first time in months. **Ladbrokes** bookmakers, a slightly more reliable indicator, shortened the 13-to-8 odds on Labour to 6-to-4 odds. But the Tory/Liberal coalition remains in firm control of Parliament, and the agenda. Miliband will need more than a good story—or a good speech—to loosen its grip.

D.D. GUTTENPLAN

MIXED MONEY BAG: Recent weeks have brought a mixed bag of news for campaign-finance reformers. First, the positive: on September 23 the House Administration Committee passed the **Fair Elections Now Act**, which incentivizes candidates to seek small donations and helps break the corporate stranglehold on our democracy. Fair Elections is a central plank of **MoveOn.org**'s "Fight Washington Corruption" pledge, which has garnered more than 500,000 signatures. Groups like the **Public Campaign Action Fund** are pressing Speaker **Nancy Pelosi** to schedule a vote in the House before the November election, and they believe they have the support to pass the bill. Polling by **Celinda Lake** shows that nearly two-thirds of voters support the legislation, including 56 percent of Republicans.

Now the bad news: on the same day, the Senate once again failed to approve the **DISCLOSE Act**, which would require a wide array of political groups to list their donors and identify themselves in ads before the election. Fifty-nine senators voted for it, which in a normal democracy would assure passage; but in the increasingly dysfunctional Senate, where sixty votes are now necessary to pass anything, it was another defeat.

The necessity of passing both of these measures keeps growing, as money gushes into the political system following the Supreme Court's **Citizens United** decision. Conservative groups are already spending millions of dollars to buy a Republican victory in the midterms, with shadowy pro-Republican groups massively outspending Democratic groups on TV ads, $23.6 million to $4.8 million.

ARI BERMAN

CHANGE THEY CAN (STILL) BELIEVE IN? Speaking to student journalists during a September 27 conference call, **President Obama** urged students to re-engage in democracy. "Change is always hard in this country," the president reminded the students, adding that "it doesn't happen overnight." While Obama's message was about long-term change, the impetus has a lot more to do with short-term calculations. A recent national poll of 18- to 29-year-olds by **Rock the Vote** suggests that the "enthusiasm gap" between young Republicans and young Democrats, while slight, is a factor that could affect the outcome in crucial swing districts in this fall's elections.

The poll found that young Republicans are paying more attention to the midterms than young Democrats are (63 percent to 58 percent). But the results aren't all grim: 46 percent of youths still have a favorable view of the Democratic Party, while only 36 percent have a favorable view of the GOP.

To capitalize on their relatively high favorability and to close the enthusiasm gap, Democrats held a series of youth-oriented events, including a rally featuring Obama at the University of Wisconsin in Madison and another rally at Pennsylvania State University headlined by Vice President Biden, both on September 28.

Whether the last-minute outreach will work remains to be seen. **Adrian Zamora**, president of Texas State College Democrats, thinks that "all the new voters in 2008 are a little weary of voting Democrat again, because of the deflated economy, controversial legislation and a president who, at times, seems to not want to put his foot down." Rock the Vote president **Heather Smith** sees similar challenges ahead but also a silver lining: "There is perhaps some cynicism, but there is also incredible optimism," she said. "We found that 83 percent of young people stated that as a group, young people have the power to change things in this country."

JOANNA CHIU

THE $4 TRILLION WAR: Nobel Prize winner and Columbia University economics professor Joseph Stiglitz, in advance of his September 30 testimony before the House Veterans Affairs Committee, announced that he and Linda Bilmes, co-authors of *The Three Trillion Dollar War*, were revising their 2008 estimate of the total cost of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. "We were grossly conservative," he said, noting that the number of veterans seeking care from the VA system since October 2001—about 600,000—far exceeds his earlier projection.

Soldiers injured on the battlefield now have a 95 percent survival rate, higher than any in history—but there are also more personnel with gravely serious injuries, who require expensive treatment.

"I think we would easily be in the $4 trillion range," he said of the wars' aggregate cost, which factors in lifetime medical care, disability compensation and Social Security for wounded veterans.

MICHAEL C. TRACEY

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the GOP plan "fiscally irresponsible" and explain why: Washington Republicans do not want to reduce spending; they want to see federal largesse going to their wealthy supporters and corporate allies. President Obama made that point well in his Saturday radio address after the pledge was released; he characterized it as "the same worn-out philosophy: cut taxes for millionaires and billionaires; cut the rules for Wall Street and the special interests; and cut the middle class loose to fend for itself."

But it is even more important that Democrats make clear where Republican fiscal irresponsibility will lead if the rising generation of GOP leaders—especially Wisconsin's Paul Ryan, the party's budget guru, and Virginia's Eric Cantor, House party whip—have anything to say about it. Democratic Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz is on the right track: "What's hidden in this pledge is the Republican pledge to privatize Social Security." In fact, Ryan and Cantor go further, talking up the replacement of Medicare with voucher schemes.

Recalling the missed opportunities of sixteen years ago, Bill Clinton says Democrats should counter the pledge with a short list of their priorities. Good idea, but the party must offer a clear alternative. Protecting Social Security and Medicare should top that list; one way to do that is by ending the Bush tax breaks for the rich. Then, the party must commit itself to fixing the jobs crisis by calling for the sort of infrastructure investment that would make a huge dent in the unemployment rate. And in an election year when the most serious Democratic losses are likely to be in the industrial states of the Great Lakes, it makes strategic as well as ethical sense for Democrats to demand a radical change to the trade policies that led to outsourcing and deindustrialization.

Finally, if the Democrats are serious about opening up a national debate to benefit themselves politically, they should be talking about loan guarantees and tax policies to push banks to start lending the more than $1 trillion they've got parked in Federal Reserve accounts. That's the money that should be creating jobs, restructuring home loans and stabilizing the economy. A national debate about preserving Social Security, creating jobs, reversing trade policies and putting pressure on big banks is not what the GOP strategists and corporate lobbyists who drafted the Pledge to America want. It may not even be what a lot of top Democrats want. But it is the debate that could assure that 2010 will not be a repeat of 1994.

JOHN NICHOLS

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

Gingrich Says Obama Has A Kenyan Anticolonial Worldview, Inherited From His Father (Yes, the Father He Barely Met)

Oh, Newt.
When you gave Democrats the boot,
Folks said that you were so astute.
Although attracting disrepute
(By skimming just a bit of loot
And tasting of forbidden fruit),
You weren't another empty suit.
Your antics were perceived as cute.
They liked to say, "That Newt's a hoot."
But now, because of your pursuit
Of Mitt, the place from which you shoot
Is lower than the hip. En route,
Your words are child's play to refute,
Since what you say does not compute.
You're sounding like a loony coot.
Oh, Newt.

Netanyahu's Freeze Scam

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's remarks at the formal White House launching of the resumed Middle East peace talks on September 2 were the clearest indication yet of his lack of seriousness. But neither the host, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, nor any of the distinguished guests seemed aware of it. Indeed, they applauded his remarks.

COMMENT

What they applauded was Netanyahu's dramatic declaration, as he faced Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, that the success of the resumed negotiations will depend on his own and Abbas's readiness to make "painful concessions" for the sake of peace.

If these words have any significance, they must mean that Netanyahu is prepared to make Israeli concessions that match Palestinian concessions: i.e., if Palestinians concede to Israel part of their territory east of the 1967 border, Israel would concede to the Palestinians comparable territory on its side of that border.

But everyone present at this festive White House event knew this to be completely untrue. Netanyahu has never offered to concede even one inch of Israeli territory to the Palestinians—not even from Palestinian territories Israel acquired in 1948 during its War of Independence, which the 1947 UN Partition Plan had assigned to Palestine's Arab population. In fact, no one has ever asked Israel to make any concession to the Palestinians—whether territory, water resources, Jerusalem or sovereignty. In respect to these and the other permanent-status issues, the concessions have all been demanded of the Palestinians. None were asked of Israel. So Netanyahu's offer of parallel Israeli concessions is a lie. Unless, of course, Netanyahu meant to apply the term "painful concessions" to his willingness to return to Palestinians a part of their own territory, all of which—up to the 1967 border—is universally recognized as being under Israeli occupation, and therefore subject to the Fourth Geneva Convention's strictures that absolutely forbid the transfer of the occupying power's population to those territories. If that is what

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he meant, what Netanyahu was telling Abbas is that Israel expects to be rewarded for returning some of the territory it unlawfully confiscated from the Palestinians by having Palestinians concede their right to the balance of that territory.

By getting the distinguished guests at this event to applaud this offer, Netanyahu can fairly be said to have done for international peace diplomacy what Bernard Madoff did for financial markets.

Ironically, Netanyahu's Likud Party has popularized a slogan that Palestinians only "take and take" while Israel's many "concessions" go unacknowledged. It is a lie that has become deeply ingrained in Israel's national narrative. For Palestinians have made a concession to Israel that is unprecedented: in 1988 the PLO agreed formally to recognize the legitimacy of Israeli sovereignty within the 1967 armistice border, an area that includes fully half the territory that, as indicated above, had been recognized as the legitimate patrimony of Palestinian Arabs in the UN Partition Plan. This reduced the Palestinians' territory from 43 to 22 percent of Palestine while enlarging Israel's territory from 56 to 78 percent.

The first public acknowledgment by an Israeli government of this unprecedented Palestinian concession (unprecedented because, as was noted in the Security Council's Resolution 242, territory cannot be acquired as a result of war, irrespective of who is the aggressor) came unintentionally from Shimon Peres earlier this year. When challenged to defend his claims for the importance of the Oslo Accords (for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize), Peres said, "Before Oslo, the Palestinian state's size should have been according to the 1947…UN map. In Oslo, Arafat moved from the 1947 map to the 1967 one. He gave up on 22 percent of the West Bank. I don't know any Arab leader who would give up 2 or 3 percent. He gave up 22 percent."

Instead of acknowledging that this concession was a gut-wrenching Palestinian contribution to peace, Peres described it as "our [i.e., Peres's] greatest achievement." Unsurprisingly, his statement has not put an end to the calumny peddled by Ehud Barak and other Israeli leaders that Yasir Arafat's real intention all along had been to salami-slice Israel's territory until it is eliminated. It is a charge that was only recently repeated by Israel's deputy prime minister and minister for strategic affairs, Moshe Ya'alon, who attributed this intention to President Abbas as well.

In these circumstances, to continue the bilateral peace talks on Netanyahu's terms would be a waste of time. Even if he agreed to reimpose the settlement "freeze" that expired on September 26, construction would continue, as it has almost unabated during the past ten months, when the freeze was in effect. As reported by Israel's media, the level of construction in the settlements during those ten months was virtually the same as in the comparable previous period, according to the government's Central Bureau of Statistics.

Instead, President Abbas should challenge Netanyahu to continue negotiations to reach agreement on a border in the next three months and declare his willingness to do so even if settle-

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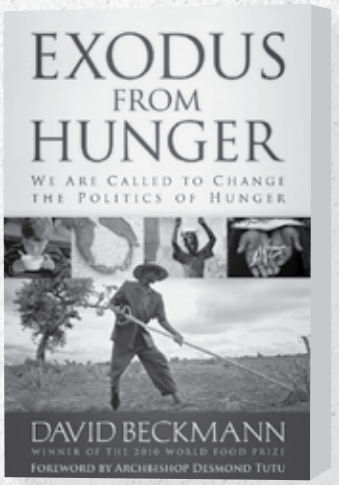

"*I plead with you to read this book and act on it.*"
—from the foreword by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

David Beckmann is president of Bread for the World and a leading advocate for ending world hunger. He was recently named the 2010 World Food Prize Laureate.

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Ben Daniel is Pastor of Foothill Presbyterian Church in San José, California, and a regular contributor to UPI online and KQED FM, the largest NPR affiliate in the United States.

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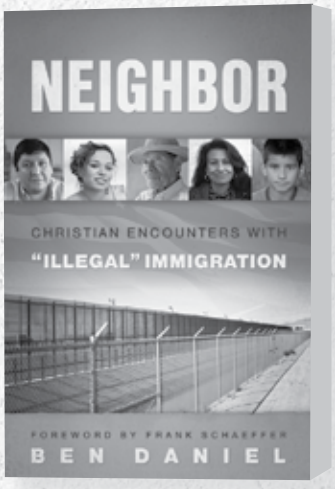

WJK FAITH *in* ACTION

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ment construction continues. However, Netanyahu would have to promise that if no border agreement is reached within three months, there would be a total freeze of all settlement construction until a border agreement is achieved. At that point, Israel can build without restraint on its side of the border, and Palestinians will be able to do so on theirs.

The likelihood of Netanyahu agreeing to this is remote, but his rejection of such an offer by Abbas would expose Netanyahu's intention to use the peace process as a cover for his government's effort to achieve the irreversibility of Israel's settlement enterprise. It would also confirm Netanyahu's commitment to viable Palestinian statehood as the sham that it is.

Unfortunately, there is no silver bullet—not even American-sponsored parameters—that can guarantee the goal of "two states living side by side in peace and security." But President Obama's present course absolutely precludes it. Instead, he must lead an international initiative to define the parameters of an Israeli-Palestinian agreement based firmly in international law and previous UN resolutions and actively promote political reconciliation among Hamas, Fatah and the other Palestinian parties. If he cannot provide that leadership, others in the international community must do so, and see to it that America will at least not stand in their way. HENRY SIEGMAN

Henry Siegman, director of the US/Middle East Project in New York, is a visiting research professor at the Sir Joseph Hotung Middle East Program, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Slavery & Climate Change

COMMENT

From the standpoint of human survival, it makes no sense: our media and political systems are losing focus on climate change long before the problem is solved—indeed, while it manifestly continues to get worse. You can help change that on October 10. That's the date of a Global Work Party intended to celebrate climate solutions and press governments for change. Some 4,483 actions (and counting) are planned in 174 countries, says Jamie Henn of 350.org, one of the groups coordinating the event. "To build a grassroots movement that can challenge Big Oil and deliver real climate action, we need to root that movement in community solutions to the climate crisis," says Henn. "By making climate solutions real and visible, we can build broader support for the type of transformation we need."

In the Bronx on October 10, residents will partner with the New York City Housing Authority to apply reflective coating to the roof of an NYCHA building, lowering its energy use. In Oakland, activists will upgrade community gardens and launch a statewide Clean Energy bike tour. In Berlin, a Silent Climate Parade featuring fifty dancers dressed as carbon dioxide molecules will highlight how human societies can produce fewer of them. In the Maldives, President Mohammed Nasheed will climb onto the roof of the presidential palace to install solar panels, thus upstaging President Obama, whose aides rejected 350.org activist Bill McKibben's request that Obama spend part of October 10 on the White House roof helping to re-install Jimmy Carter's solar panels (which still work fine, demonstrating that, in McKibben's words, "We've known how to solve this problem for a long time"). You can join a local event, or organize your own, by visiting 350.org.

Taking action is the surest antidote I know to the despair that tempts anyone who gazes unflinchingly at the climate challenge. It also helps to study past social movements and realize that the path to victory can begin in the most unexpected places. Consider the striking parallels between the eighteenth-century campaign to end slavery in the British Empire and today's climate fight: just as the slave trade was central to Britain's prosperity, so the fossil fuel industry and its allies are the most powerful sector of the modern global economy. And just as the victims of slavery were distant unknowns to most Englishmen and -women, so the victims of climate change mostly live in strange, far-off lands (including the future) and thus have no vote.

As Adam Hochschild documents in his magisterial *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves*, abolitionists were as discouraged in 1792 as climate advocates are today, and for apparently good reason. True, the abolitionists had scored important successes. After five years of grassroots organizing, they had won over a majority of the English public to the previously marginal opinion that the slave trade should be outlawed. And in the spring of 1792, the House of Commons had approved a bill that limited aspects of the trade. The House of Lords, however, rejected the bill, and when war with France broke out the next year, the momentum for reform seemed spent. Yet the war proved to be the abolitionists' savior. When a maritime lawyer named James Stephen discovered that British ships were supplying slaves to French colonies in the Caribbean, it enabled abolitionists to argue that the slave trade was helping the enemy. That turned the tide, and both houses of Parliament voted to ban the slave trade entirely.

Historical analogies are never perfect, but Hochschild says that the US climate movement may now be facing its own 1792 moment. "The House of Representatives passed a weak climate bill last summer that was then rejected by the Senate," he observes. "Meanwhile, the recession and two wars seem to command all of the political attention." But the abolitionists' victory shows that fortunes can change, if activists can recognize and exploit opportunities. The abolitionists won, Hochschild says, because "they were absolutely brilliant organizers who saw what worked and went for it. They were not afraid to hitch their campaign to the war fever against France, for example. I'm not an organizer, so I don't want to tell climate activists what to do. But I do think we need to take the recession and wars and figure out a way to make them work in our favor, challenging as that may be. Because those are the political conditions we face now."

There is one huge difference, however, between the fights against slavery and against climate change. It took fifty years for British abolitionists to halt legal slavery. Climate activists have much less time to reverse civilization's trajectory. Which is all the more reason to do your part on October 10. MARK HERTSGAARD

Mark Hertsgaard (markhertsgaard.com) is the author of the forthcoming HOT: Living Through the Next Fifty Years on Earth.

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Katha Pollitt

Feminist Mothers, Flapper Daughters?

Ah, the young. In "American Electra: Feminism's Ritual Matricide," her cover story in the October *Harper's*, Susan Faludi argues that young feminists are frivolous fashionistas who choose Lady Gaga over Gloria Steinem and consumerism over activism, thereby betraying the cause—and their second-wave mothers, real and figurative. Faludi thinks today's young feminists are out to kill their mothers, much as young women in the 1920s rejected the Victorian matriarchs who had won them the vote: "Over and over, a younger generation disavows the women's movement as a daughter disowns her mother." I admire Faludi immensely and consider her a friend. There is definitely something in what she says—why *are* we always reinventing the feminist wheel?—but I think she paints with too sweeping and too dark a brush.

Before we get to that, though, let me admit that I, too, find young feminists a bit trying on occasion. I'm tired of their constant use of teeny-bopper words like "amazing" and "awesome," the lazy use of obscenities and the way they refer to themselves as "girls" and "chicks." What's wrong with "woman"? Is "woman" too fat for them? I don't get their obsession with ads and women's magazines and pop culture and celebrities—to me, feminism is about getting that stuff out of your head, not coming up with yet more reasons to object to it while remaining in its thrall. I'm tired of "body issues" getting so much more emphasis than economic and political ones, and the endless fetishizing of "choice" where anything a woman wants to do is sacrosanct, including stripping, prostitution and porn, which are simultaneously obscurely troubling and perfectly OK! Like Faludi, I resent their caricature of 1960s–'70s feminism as all-white, even racist, when as Sara Evans showed in *Personal Politics*, the women's movement came out of the civil rights movement. Many second-wavers were intensely self-critical around race—Redstockings even decided it was unsisterly to black women for white women to date black men. Young women didn't invent intersectionality, and it really annoys me when they wave it around like some kind of slice-and-dice Ginsu knife whenever an older feminist tries to talk about *women*.

And yet, a lot of what irks me about young feminists irked me about older feminists too. The oft-parodied specifying of standpoint—"As a half-Irish, half-Chicana, disabled, celibate bisexual, I…"—comes straight out of the ever more splintering identity politics of the late '70s. Sex work, as Faludi notes, has always been a flashpoint of feminist politics, as have beauty and body issues. Faludi frames her piece around the most recent NOW election, in which 33-year-old Latifa Lyles was narrowly defeated by 56-year-old Terry O'Neill after a nasty campaign with generational insults both ways. If I had been voting I'd have gone for Latifa, because the boomer cohort that controls NOW needs a shake-up.

The fact is, these same young women (some of whom are not even so young anymore—Rebecca Walker, founder of Third Wave Foundation and famous hater of her mother, Alice, is 40!) are doing a lot of activist work. They start abortion funds and scrappy groups like Hollaback!, which protests street harassment; they volunteer at rape crisis centers; they mentor teens; they organize conferences; they write books by the dozen and blogs by the hundreds. Faludi seems to take a dim view of blogging, but the Jezebel blogger Tracie Egan, *aka* Slut Machine, who made light of date rape, is hardly representative. Sure, blogging can degenerate into its own little hothouse world—but sites like Jezebel and Feministing and Pandagon and *Salon*'s Broadsheet have introduced a lot of young women to feminist ideas and activism too. It's how a lot of people, including me, keep up with the news on women.

Young feminists, in short, are not like the '20s flappers who repudiated Elizabeth Cady Stanton or their "I'm not a feminist, but…" apolitical descendants today. They're *claiming* feminism—they just want a bigger place in it.

To me the generational struggle is not about killing the mother in some deep and symbolic way—actually, lots of feminists, then and now, love and even admire their mothers and revere older figures like Steinem. It's about young women jockeying with the feminist establishment for power and visibility. They want to sit on panels and make policy and give keynote addresses; they want attention for their books and blogs and recognition for their hard activist work. Their bad-mouthing or mocking their elders is part of this struggle, which has been going on for a while. Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, now 40, kicked it off with *Manifesta* in 2000.

At the same time it's understandable why this maneuvering for position sometimes rankles the old guard. It may well be true, as Jessica Valenti, among many others, complains, that young volunteers and interns are treated like scullery maids at feminist organizations—lots of bosses aren't so nice; lots of workplaces are dysfunctional. But you know what? People in their 20s and early 30s don't usually get to run big established national organizations—groups with large budgets, and lots of staffers, and donors who need care and feeding, and certain set ways of doing things. In 2001, when Anthony Romero became executive director of the ACLU at 36, its first Latino and first gay leader, he was replacing Ira Glasser, who at 63 had been running the show since 1978! The changeover was a very big deal and rocked the organization for several years. It's only natural for people to want to stay in charge of the movement they poured their life energies into—"Get your own damned torch," Robin Morgan famously told a young woman who intimated it was time to pass hers on. "I'm still using mine." As I've written many times, young women in a hurry should use their fabulous social networking skills to start their own organizations.

After all, that's what their mothers—and fathers—did, not so very long ago. ■

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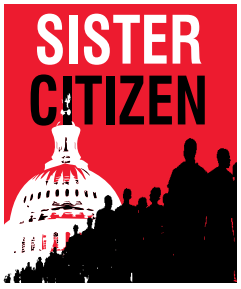
Melissa Harris-Lacewell

Fighting for Change, Longing for the Sea

I was recently reminded of a famous quote from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, author of the classic text *The Little Prince*. Saint-Exupéry offered a particularly relevant lesson for our current politics: "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea." I believe Americans are in need of a refresher course on how to long for the sea.

If 2008 was an election marked by hope and readiness for change, 2010 can be understood as an election fueled by fear and loathing. On the right, disaffected Tea Parties are steeped in rhetoric about the president's secret religious affiliations, about the burden of deficits, about economic competition from undocumented workers, about America's flagging international influence and about the terrifying prospect of expanding the social safety net. On the left, progressives can barely hide their disgust with healthcare reform they deem insufficient and financial reform they find laughably weak, with Democrats who seem unable to silence the filibustering GOP, with a president who did not immediately withdraw all American combat troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, and with the emerging populist backlash. Both sides wring their hands about the corrupting influence of corporate money in elections and fret about the continuing economic crisis. Each side accuses the other of stupidity, arrogance, racism and inadequate patriotism.



Despite the apocalyptic gloom of Democrats and the premature haughtiness of Republicans, the 2010 election cycle is unexceptional thus far. Democrats are likely to lose seats in November, but the party of the president routinely shrinks in the House in the first midterm. The Democratic majority in the Senate will likely deteriorate, so breaking a filibuster will be all the more difficult, but having a sixty-plus majority is a rare occurrence in the Senate. Neither of these election outcomes is particularly surprising or historic. Since the mid-1950s voters have been notoriously fickle in their partisan attachments and surprisingly enthusiastic about divided government. The utter mendacity of these elections may prove to be the most surprising part about them.

The anxieties and anger animating the electorate, however, are reasonable cause for concern. There is nothing to fear in robust disagreement among citizens or in the predictable shifts of power that follow elections. There is real danger in a political environment unable to tolerate ideological differences and unwilling to build even the most tenuous bridges across partisan divides.

At the moment, Americans seem so intent on gathering the tools and perfecting the plans for our individual boats that we have lost sight of the immense sea. We are faced with the challenge of pursuing our short-term policy agendas while remaining cognizant of our long-term national interests, and, more important, we must remain aware of our limited ability to predict what our future challenges will be. Like our founders we are part of the continuous process of making and remaking America. I am always excited to lecture my students about the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson's 1776 manifesto is easily my favorite of the founding documents. My respect for it is rooted in the human frailties and ethical failures of Jefferson himself. Jefferson was an enslaver who held his own children in intergenerational human bondage. He was a misogynist who could not fathom women as equal partners at home or in government.

But the Declaration of Independence is an extraordinary document that surpasses Jefferson. It is a social contract that asserts the self-evident nature of human equality at a time when such equality was anything but self-evident. It is a document that boldly asserts the primacy of human flourishing and the responsibility of governments to ensure that flourishing. It is a document whose promise has never been fulfilled, but in its poetic and powerful language it paints a picture of the sea so compelling that we cannot help but long for it. It is a political vision so extraordinary that even the effort of leaning toward its fulfillment is ennobling.

Compared with the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution is a feeble and flawed document. The Constitution codified slavery, women's inequality and elitism. It crafted a system purposeful in its inefficiency and limited in its accountability. Repeatedly the anemic beginnings of a truly democratic republic have been tweaked, amended and updated as we press toward the vision laid out in the Declaration of Independence. Today, the Tea Party is attempting to hijack the legacy of the American Revolution as though it belongs only to a single ideological tradition. But no one can put the ocean in their pocket. American revolutionary philosophy is so inherently, idealistically and optimistically broad-minded that it defies even the bigoted and limited men who crafted it.

This year of national discontent may yet be an opportunity to introduce meaningful structural reform. History tells us that some structural tinkering will produce good outcomes as well as unintended negative consequences. But the reforms are just tools; it is the motivation for these reforms that matters most. Many Americans joined the Obama coalition because the 2008 campaign consistently reminded us of the distance we had traveled as a nation and encouraged us to long for the endless immensity of a fully realized democratic promise. In January 2009 the work of shipbuilding began, and with it came the predictable disagreements about the specifics. We cannot fear these battles; without them we would build nothing. But even as we build, we must keep lifting our eyes to the horizon to renew our yearning for something greater than our own narrow victories. ■

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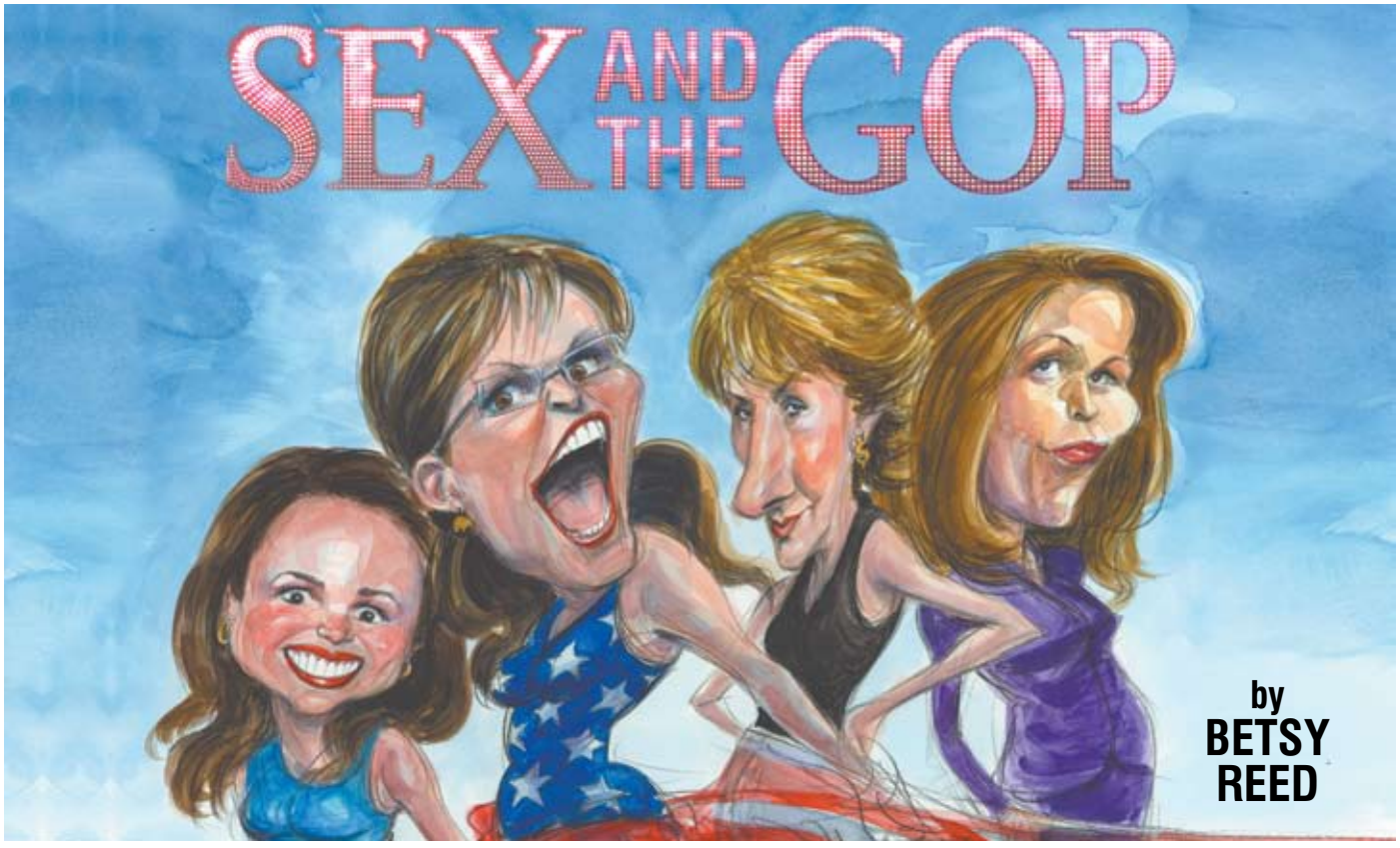

The Republican Party is hard-selling its hot Mama Grizzlies. But who's buying?

In the media spectacle that is the 2010 midterm elections, women of the GOP are playing starring roles. They have figured prominently in nearly every plot and subplot that holds any real interest or potential for debased amusement: from Indian-American Nikki Haley's triumph over her mudslinging male rivals for the GOP gubernatorial nod in South Carolina, to Carly Fiorina's catty open-mic swipe at her opponent Barbara Boxer's hair in the first-ever contest between two women for a California Senate seat, to WWF founder and Connecticut Senate hopeful Linda McMahon's gifts to oh-so-lucky Democratic ad firms (including video of the candidate physically attacking a buxom, scantily clad woman purporting to be her husband's lover), to the daily dose of clips revealing Christine O'Donnell's youthful preoccupations with witchcraft and masturbation. Remember when politics was boring?

Before the new GOP women entered the picture, the Republican Party was like Kansas in *The Wizard of Oz*: colorless, defined by a white male old guard along with a lackluster lineup of "young guns" cut from the same drab cloth. Now the party is dancing down a yellow brick road to what it hopes is victory in November. As Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty, a 2012 presidential aspirant, proclaimed, "It's going to be a new day, a new era in terms of the face and voice and tone of the Republican Party, and I think that's really good." A movie just released by the conservative group Citizens United tells this happy tale: *Fire From the Heartland: The Awakening of the Conservative Woman* features Michele Bachmann and Ann Coulter, among others.

The "GOP Year of the Woman," a label tossed out by pundits in the wake of some primaries in June, has been zestfully adopted by party operatives. "I like strong women," wrote strategist Mark McKinnon in *The Daily Beast*. "Agree with them or not, it's the women of the GOP…who are tough enough to say exactly what they think. And their words are resonating with an increasingly vocal electoral bloc."

But are they? Has the party truly cultivated and supported its women candidates, and is it, as a result, poised to bring more women to Washington and more women voters into the fold? Or, as it lurches to the right, is the GOP in fact alienating women, including voters and potential leaders, who tend to be less conservative than men in their partisan identification and ideological views? Is the party's embrace of the current array of female candidates really about enhancing its appeal to *men*?

Before turning to these questions, let's be precise: if 2010 is the year of anything other than antiestablishment rage, it is the year of the *right-wing* woman, a type that has prospered at the expense of moderates, male and female alike. It is true that a record number of women filed to run for office this year as Republicans—some of whom may have been inspired by Sarah Palin's example. But it is also true that a record number lost: of the 128 women running for the House, eighty-one were defeated in their primaries, leaving forty-seven still in the running. In the Senate, seventeen filed to run, but only five won. That's a much higher rate of primary loss for Republican women than in the previous six election cycles. With some exceptions, the female candidates who survived are very, very

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conservative. Debbie Walsh, director of the Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics, says, "This is something quite far from a year of the woman. From the past, I would have assumed that the Republican women who are elected tend to be more moderate than Republican men. In this crop, we saw some very conservative women running and winning." It may well be that the Tea Party, with its bottom-up structure, provided an opening for ultraright women, like Christine O'Donnell, who had been grassroots activists but were hungry for a larger role in the electoral arena.

But to understand where GOP gender dynamics really are, it's important to consider not only the women who won this year's primaries but those who lost, and why. The picture that emerges is one of a national party that, at best, takes its women candidates for granted even as it plays up its new female-friendly image. Take Alaska's Lisa Murkowski and Colorado's Jane Norton, both mainstream Republican women who saw little support from the party as they struggled to fend off their hard-right male challengers. While the party whacked away at O'Donnell in its futile attempt to save moderate Mike Castle in Delaware, it failed to respond with such alacrity when the Palin-endorsed Tea Partyer Joe Miller took aim at Murkowski—emphasizing her relative liberalism on abortion rights—in the Alaska Senate primary. "The national party seemed conflicted about Murkowski," noted another GOP woman who has had her own conflicts with the party, former New Jersey Governor Christie Todd Whitman, in an interview for this article.

Mainstream Republicans Lisa Murkowski and Jane Norton saw little support from the party as they battled hard-right male challengers.

When, after her primary loss, Murkowski launched a write-in campaign targeting Miller—a climate change denier who favors abolishing Medicaid and Social Security—as an extremist, the party's wrath was unleashed upon her, with minority leader Mitch McConnell threatening to strip her of her position as ranking member of the Energy Committee and declaring that she "no longer has my support for serving in any leadership roles." As Senate vice chair, she had been the party's sole female in a top leadership position. Karl Rove called her a "spoilsport" and her write-in campaign "sad and sorry."

As for Norton, the GOP establishment candidate for Senate in Colorado, after being recruited by the party she was largely on her own in a nasty contest with Tea Partyer Ken Buck—who opposes abortion even in cases of rape and incest along with many forms of birth control and asked for voters' support because "I don't wear high heels." A much hoped-for Palin endorsement never came through for Norton.

Even though moderate Republican female candidates are more in sync with women voters, they are not faring well in the present environment, in which the passion is with the angry Tea Party voters who are "sick and tired of what is going on" but are less clear about what they are for and are unmoved by women who "don't voice the same kind of passion but want to get things done," Christie Whitman observed. But Whitman still sees "an enormous place" for moderate women in politics and peril ahead for the GOP if they continue to be sidelined. "Purity is a nice thing in concept, but in a country as diverse as ours, [the party] risks becoming irrelevant" if it pursues its present course.

It was not always thus. The first female senator to be elected in her own right (as opposed to inheriting a seat after the death of her husband) was the prochoice Kansas Republican Nancy Kassebaum in 1978, who famously worked with Ted Kennedy on healthcare legislation. In the '80s, Republican women actually outnumbered Democratic women in Congress, and many of them stood in the middle of the road ideologically. Over the succeeding three decades, however, Republican women in Congress have moved steadily to the right, according to a study by the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota—to the point where in 2009 they were voting more conservatively than 77 percent of the House as a whole, a modern record. At the same time, their overall numbers relative to Democratic women have diminished; today, of a total of seventy-three female House members, just seventeen are Republicans. In the Senate, just four of seventeen women are Republicans, making Maine moderates Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins members of a rare species indeed. One reason for the paucity of Republican women in office is that qualified candidates are much less likely than their Democratic counterparts to have been recruited to run for office by party leaders and activists, according to research by Jennifer Lawless of American University and Richard Fox of Loyola Marymount University.

Among the very few institutional forces dedicated to fostering Republican women's leadership is the Susan B. Anthony List Candidate Fund. (It was at an SBA breakfast that Sarah Palin gave the Mama Grizzlies speech heard round the world.) But the fund, which says it promotes prolife women in politics, allotted 25 percent of its Congressional endorsements this cycle to antiabortion men, highlighting how several such candidates could unseat prochoice women in Congress. "Have you heard about the wonderful SBA-list endorsed men candidates who are running against women who have been backed by pro-abortion groups?" asked one fundraising appeal titled "More Nancy Pelosis?"

Then there are groups like the Republican Majority for Choice, which are facing a tough slog right now. "I would be very careful marketing all Republican women candidates as Sarah Palin. I actually think that's insulting to these women—they should be seen on their own terms," says RMC co-chair Candy Straight, who observes how rough the electoral environment is for moderate women, who are seen as more ready to collaborate than convey the voters' anger to Washington. (Moderate GOP women running in governor's races appear likely to fare better in November, perhaps because voters are more apt to support a

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Grant L. Voth is Professor Emeritus in English and Interdisciplinary Studies at Monterey Peninsula College. He received his B.A. from Concordia Senior College, his M.A. from St. Thomas College, and his Ph.D. in English from Purdue University. Prof. Voth has taught at Northern Illinois University and Virginia Tech, he is the author of more than 30 articles and books, and wrote the official study guides for many of the plays in the BBC's The Shakespeare Plays project.

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perceived problem-solver in an executive role.) To put the "GOP Year of the Woman" in further perspective, keep in mind that some of the most conspicuous Republican women candidates, like Carly Fiorina, Linda McMahon and Meg Whitman (who has spent a record-shattering $119 million), are self-funders—meaning that their campaigns do not reflect any significant investment of resources by the national party.

Just as the "stampede of pink elephants" that Sarah Palin warned Washington to expect in November may not amount to more than a modest new presence in Congress, the Mama Grizzlies, as an electoral bloc, do not pose a tangible threat to Democrats, strategists say. The gender gap, in which women voters consistently favor Democrats, is holding steady this year, at anywhere from 16 to 20 points, depending on the poll. Says a high-level Democratic operative working on the midterm election campaign, "Do we have a battle on our hands? Yes. But am I concerned that in particular we have the Mama Grizzlies, lots of really conservative women, coming to the polls? No. That is a branding strategy, not an electoral strategy."

The devoted female following in so many breathless stories about the Mama Grizzlies isn't imaginary—it's just been inflated.

Although the electorate in general is more conservative this year, and conservative voters are more energized, there has been no relative growth in the proportion of women who describe themselves as conservative—it's around one-third, compared with 44 percent of men. That doesn't mean that the passionate female following described in so many breathless stories about the Mama Grizzlies is imaginary, just that its size and significance have been inflated. "Palin does have appeal among really conservative women, but it is a very small group. They do a great job of marketing it, to make it look bigger than it is," says Molly O'Rourke of Hart Research Associates.

Women, by and large, are leery of the new right-wing female politicians, but men are far more receptive. Palin has a much larger gender gap than her ideological persuasion would predict: men are split 44 to 45 between those who hold favorable and unfavorable views of her; for women, the split is 35 to 58, according to a *National Journal* poll. Says Christie Whitman, "Palin appeals to more men than women. It was the white men in the party who put her on the ticket [in 2008], thinking that women who would have voted for Hillary would vote for her. That was dumb. They weren't going to buy into that." In a recent survey presenting respondents with a hypothetical match-up between Palin and Obama, Obama beat Palin by 13 points among women, but men preferred Palin by 2 points. In other words, if it were up to men, Palin might very well become president in 2012 (if it were up to white men, she'd be a shoo-in).

No doubt the "babe factor" has something to do with it: Palin's sex appeal is a frequent topic of right-wing male talkers like Rush Limbaugh, and similar voices in Delaware waxed on about Christine O'Donnell being "easy on the eyes"; one even issued an "Alert" for the "Major Babe." The gambit resembles that of Fox News shows with predominantly male audiences that have featured a bevy of attractive right-wing females, boosting the careers of commentators like Laura Ingraham and Ann Coulter. In Minnesota a Republican district office sparked an outcry in August when it posted a salacious video showing GOP politicians and pundits, including Palin and Coulter, in flattering poses set to "She's a Lady," followed by a montage of stern images of Nancy Pelosi and Hillary Clinton set to "Who Let the Dogs Out?"

More substantively, government-bashing, a favorite pastime of many ultraconservative female candidates, goes over much better with men than with women, who are more likely to support an active government role in the economy, education, healthcare and environmental protection. After all, women benefit more from government policies like childcare subsidies and family leave, and they are disproportionately reliant on Social Security to protect them from poverty in old age, so it is only logical that they look askance at politicians of either gender who make careers out of demonizing government.

Michele Bachmann provides a vivid example of how right-wing female politicians divide voters along gender lines. In her quite conservative Minnesota district—as she has emerged as a national Tea Party darling, inveighing against "death panels" and urging Minnesotans to get "armed and dangerous" to "fight back" against cap-and-trade legislation—she has become increasingly dependent on male support. According to political scientist Eric Ostermeier of the University of Minnesota, who blogs at smartpoliticsblog.org, in polling before the 2008 contest Bachmann received support from 49 percent of men and 42 percent of women. In a recent poll, she got the support of 56 percent of men versus just 39 percent of women against her new rival, Democrat Tarryl Clark. What's more, the two women vying in the Democratic primary for a shot to oust Bachmann reaped big donations from female donors, at twice the rate of such contributions to other Congressional candidates, indicating a fierce determination among Democratic women to knock Bachmann out.

"Bachmann's appeal is definitely more to men. People here are really focused on bread-and-butter issues, and women are disproportionately affected when the economy is bad," says Donna Cassutt, associate chair of the Democratic Farmer Labor Party. She adds, "Women don't just vote for women. They must be capable, prowoman, profamily. Bachmann takes a hard line with the Tea Party against women's issues. And women are starting to say, We don't have jobs; we need more support for public education and healthcare. And they are looking for an alternative."

In Nevada, where all eyes are on Sharron Angle's Tea Party–infused run against Senate majority leader Harry Reid, the gender gap is similarly pronounced. Angle's unfavorables among women, at 64 percent, surpass even Palin's. (Christie Whitman, apprised of these numbers, quips, "Well, I would

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hope so, frankly" before hastening to add, "much as I'd love to see Harry Reid go down.") This trend is not lost on Reid's campaign, which has been targeting women with ads featuring Angle's positions on women's issues and others, like Social Security, that are especially important to female voters. Angle has given them a lot to work with, from her statement about how rape victims who become pregnant should avoid abortion and turn "a lemon situation into lemonade"; to her declaration that it is "right" and "acceptable" for women to raise children rather than work outside the home; to her infamous pledges to phase out Social Security and abolish the Education Department; to her vote against a law that, according to Reid's campaign, would prevent Nevada from being a "safe haven" for domestic abusers. In response to these and other attacks, Angle accused Reid of trying to "hit the girl." (In an attempt at damage control, Nevada Republican National Committeewoman Heidi Smith told *Politico*, "We always wondered what would happen with Harry and his nastiness because some people would get upset if he's mean to a woman.")

Even Meg Whitman, an oft-cited role model for moderate women in the party, struggled initially to attract female support in her bid to become governor of California. During the primary, in which she tacked right on issues such as immigration, she had the backing of 40 percent of Republican men, versus 30 percent of women. Now, up against Democrat Jerry Brown, she has been making a concerted effort to appeal to women, forming a campaign group called MegaWoman, dedicated to attracting female voters and volunteers. And while she still owes much of her strength to her consistent support among white men, she has pulled even with Brown among women, a rare feat for a Republican these days (and something Carly Fiorina, running a more conservative campaign for Senate in the same state, has not achieved). The Whitman campaign is being closely watched by moderate Republican women nationwide, who hope that, if elected, she would broaden the scope of what is permissible in Republican discourse. "Whitman can't afford to talk much about being prochoice right now. Once she's earned the respect of the right, then she'll have leverage," says Margaret Hoover, a Fox News commentator and self-described conservative Republican who is also an ardent advocate of choice and gay rights.

In the bigger picture, while Republicans crow about their "Year of the Woman" and pander to their base of white men (who prefer them, today, by a whopping margin of 25 points), Democrats see the support of women as a bright spot on an otherwise gloomy horizon. But there are ominous signs of torpor in this ordinarily energetic group. In a Gallup poll taken in September, women were much less likely than men to say they had given much thought to this year's midterms, 31 percent to 45 percent. This is a key indicator of who is likely to turn out at the polls, and it's significantly lower than in previous years, though it is important to remember that women tend to make their decisions later, and they are also more likely to deem themselves uninformed even when they are more informed than male voters. Still, it hints strongly at the much-feared "enthusiasm gap," which may see Tea Partyers flocking to the polls while women—among other core Democratic constituencies like blacks and young people—stay home. "This is what wakes me up at night," says Stephanie Schriock, president of EMILY's List.

Just like the rest of the demoralized progressive base, women had high hopes for Obama but feel let down by his administration. Women, especially those who are noncollege educated, are economically anxious and frustrated with the jobs situation. And although they might favor some aspects of the healthcare reform law, they don't see it as a "lifeline," according to pollster Geoff Garin of Hart Research. They don't feel that the Democrats and the Obama administration have done enough for them. If they had to choose, they'd mostly opt for Democrats; but many don't believe that it makes much difference which party controls Congress.

Schriock contends that when presented with detailed information, women—including those who are swing voters—will head to the polls and pull the lever for Democratic candidates. "What we've seen, in poll after poll, in House and Senate races, is that when you lay out the case clearly about what these Republicans bring to the table, women who are independent or even Republican-leaning come back to the Democratic candidates. That is a really good sign, so that is what we are going to spend our time doing," says Schriock.

> If it were up to men, Palin might very well become president in 2012 (if it were up to white men, she'd be a shoo-in).

EMILY's List launched a "Sarah Doesn't Speak for Me" campaign to challenge Palin's claim to represent ordinary women, and it has received emphatic responses from many women, including Republicans. But it remains to be seen whether the masses of women who are turned off by the Michele Bachmanns and Sharron Angles running for office will turn out to reject them at the polls or will simply tune out the election.

When all is said and done in the 2010 midterms, it's quite possible, even likely, that the ranks of women in Congress will be depleted by ten or more. Given the Democratic advantage in women legislators, even if a few more Republican women are elected, a bad year for Dems will be a bad year for women, as many Democratic women legislators who arrived in 2006 or 2008—like Arizona's Gabrielle Giffords, Colorado's Betsey Markey and Illinois's Debbie Halvorson—find themselves vulnerable to challenges from Republican men. Such a decline in female representation would be the first in more than thirty years. We may see the faces of some newly elected right-wing female legislators on TV, but moderate and independent women will likely find themselves with an even smaller voice in Washington. The irony is that, in this so-called year of the woman, this result will be, more than anything else, an expression of the preferences and passions of angry white men. ■

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Democrats: Remember the Ladies!

The party's reluctance to capitalize on its feminist successes makes it look scared—and weak.

by REBECCA TRAISTER

Funny how even in these days of female CEO candidates and maverick Mama Grizzlies, many Democratic women still relate to Abigail Adams's 234-year-old wry (and slightly pissy) plea to her husband, John, and his nation-building buddies to "remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors." Some of us find ourselves wondering why our party still shuns a public celebration of its female power and why it still appears hesitant to boost its strong female candidates.

234 years later, Abigail Adams is still waiting...

Left-leaning lady trouble is ironic, since by many measures women *are* the Democratic Party—or at least 57 percent of it in the 2008 election. Moreover, the party has long been tagged as feminine: focused on purportedly soft concerns like healthcare, reproductive rights, social programs and the economy, as opposed to the more testicular national security obsessions of Republicans. Twenty-five of the thirty-eight female senators in history have been Democrats, and sixty-nine of the ninety Congressional seats currently held by women belong to Democrats. As Stephanie Schriock, head of EMILY's List, says, "I think the Democratic Party strives to be a party of fairness and equal opportunity; that can be seen in the Democratic structure itself. You have a chair and vice chair, and in every state one has to be a man and one has to be a woman."

The gender quotas, (usually) female-friendly policy priorities and slowly but steadily improving stats are all terrific. So why are we not hearing the party own its commitment to women's progress by lending full-throated support to its female candidates? Democrats were recently forced to cough up the baleful statistic that only three of thirteen members of Red to Blue, its battleground district support network, are female. At around the same time, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee backed the male candidate, Representative Ed Case, in a special election for a Hawaii House seat, attempting to push his female opponent, Colleen Hanabusa—endorsed by EMILY's List, labor unions and both of Hawaii's senators—out of the race. Although gifted Texan orators Barbara Jordan and Ann Richards have given star-making keynote addresses at the party's national conventions, Democrats have not put a woman on that particular podium since 1992. And in the six cycles since the history-making nomination of Geraldine Ferraro for the vice presidency, in 1984, not one other woman has been named to the top ticket.

A reluctance to advertise the centrality of women within the Democratic Party has been explained away for years as tactical necessity. Labeled the Mommy Party since the gender gap first yawned open (and understanding this not to be a compliment), Democratic leaders have made a series of strategic moves to masculinize—and thus legitimize—their brand, including bargaining away reproductive rights to secure majorities on legislation. It's a process that has not been exclusive to politics. "In any profession, philanthropy or business or anything that becomes majority women, that [female reputation] gets to be a problem, and men get put in power to compensate," says Marie Wilson, head of the White House Project, which aims to advance women's leadership.

This aversion to any hint of femininity is likely why we rarely hear about the prowoman legislation Democrats *have* pushed through. The first bill President Obama signed was the foot-stomping, beret-tossing Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, about which we don't hear a peep these days, even as the purportedly women-driven Tea Party barks about the ways women have been economically injured by this administration. And while Nancy Pelosi crowed in March about how, thanks to healthcare reform, being a woman no longer counts as a pre-existing medical condition, she was among the few Democrats to whoop it up on this score. And why are so many Congressional Democrats distancing themselves from the first female speaker of the House—arguably one of the most efficient, effective and dynamic ones in recent history—and apparently siding with the GOP attack featuring Pelosi as the Wicked Witch of the West?

The party's reluctance to capitalize on its feminist successes makes it look scared and, well, weak. It has also allowed Sarah Palin and her brood of appallingly conservative female candidates to step into the void, attempting to rebrand their female-unfriendly ideology as the estrogen-driven arbiter of gender equality. Of course, that's strategic too. As Schriock notes, the current Republican vogue for the language but not the mechanisms of women's empowerment "is a political tactic to decrease the gender gap [to benefit Republicans]…and there's no policy behind it that [benefits] American women."

Fair enough. But Palin's explosive success in attracting an impassioned female following offers evidence that some entrenched attitudes about women and power are beginning to shift in ways that Democrats would be wise to pay attention to. As false as Palin's claims to feminism ring, we can't forget that they are coming just two years after 18 million Democrats voted for a woman with a real-life commitment to socially progressive policy and an actual stake in the feminist legacy. It should be increasingly clear that an appetite for dynamic

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female leadership, perhaps long suppressed, has been whetted, and that either party might benefit by rising to satisfy it.

Yet in this election cycle, we see no Democratic equivalent to the Mama Grizzlies, no energetic retort to Republicans' anemic claims that they are the party of women. Why are Democrats reluctant to take this moment to assert their association with the legacy of women's liberation as a point of pride? Why has there been no attempt to promote national stars or to capitalize on the argument that empowering gifted women—especially those whose policy aims actually benefit other women—is a noble, progressive goal to which we should all proudly commit ourselves?

"They come to you every four years and say, We need your vote, but never ask for voices and visions," says Wilson. "If you don't give people opportunity and power within a system, they don't stick with you.… It's time for the party to stop just asking us to vote and say, We want you at the table of power."

Indeed, the argument that not enough women put themselves forward to run for office is growing increasingly feeble. The year after Hillary Clinton's candidacy, enrollment in the White House Project's leadership training programs mushroomed, Wilson says, noting that she recently returned from training 100 women, a third of them Native American, in Minnesota's north country. Two hundred and ninety-eight women from both parties filed to run for either the House or Senate during this cycle, an all-time high.

"I've traveled all over the country for the past two years, and everyone knows this is the time," says Wilson. "It's also a time when the Democrats could call on their women's base, go out there and recruit like mad on its women's base. Healthcare and education are at the top of the nation's agenda now. Women are the ones out there creating jobs, pioneering micro-enterprise, doing small businesses." Referring to Democrats as "a party full of Grizzlies all over the country," Wilson urges, "You really want to get the party moving again? Be the party that declares they are going for parity in political leadership in our country. That would be such a message."

Democratic leaders must recognize that the nation's views on women and power are changing. They might also consider it a moral and social imperative for the party that relies on women, and to which women's progress has been historically tied, to treat its women as a fundamental asset rather than a vaguely irritating embarrassment.

"We need to be louder about how we're the party that's supported and empowered women in this country," says Schriock, adding that of late, "there is more conversation and dialogue about feminism and women's empowerment." The opportunity to capitalize on the re-emerging engagement with gender issues, she concedes, might be one "that Sarah Palin has allowed us to take, because we've got truth on our side." Among the truths Schriock says she and her organization will set about publicizing as soon as the midterms are over are that "we are the party that kept women from being a pre-existing condition in healthcare, who fought for Lilly Ledbetter."

Democrats must hammer home their woman-friendly bona fides, and they must also be fundamentally more woman-friendly. They must reaffirm a commitment to reproductive rights as a cardinal component of a progressive mission—not simply a pesky single issue but crucial to the social, economic and political equality of half the population. They must seek out the future female faces of the party. Yes, recruit more women, but take advantage of the ones already in office, the Amy Klobuchars and Debbie Wasserman-Schultzes. Give them the spotlit berths and career-making speeches. And the next time there is a female Democratic candidate for president (which, *nota bene*, might not be so far in the future), for God's sake, take time to celebrate—or at least note—the remarkable historical strides she's made.

If Democrats are to stay relevant and persuasively assert themselves as the party of progressive America, they must man up by admitting—and more than that, proudly promising—that their future will rest in part in the hands of women. ■

Who Stole Feminism?

By focusing on gender alone, second-wave feminists opened the door for the Mama Grizzlies.

by JESSICA VALENTI

Sarah Palin opposes abortion and comprehensive sex education. While mayor of Wasilla she made sexual assault victims pay for their own rape kits. She also calls herself a feminist. Delaware GOP Senate nominee Christine O'Donnell has said that allowing women to attend military academies "cripples the readiness of our defense" and that wives should "graciously submit" to their husbands—but her website touts her "commitment to the women's movement."

Pundits who once mocked women's rights activists as ugly bra burners are abuzz over the "new conservative feminism," and the Tea Party is lauding itself as a women's movement.

The right once disparaged feminism as man-hating and baby-killing, but now "feminist" is the must-have label for women on the right. Whether or not this rebranding strategy actually succeeds in overcoming the GOP's antiwomen reputation is unclear (see Betsy Reed, "Sex and the GOP," page 11). After all, Republicans have long supported overturning *Roe v. Wade*, voted against family and maternity leave, and fought groundbreaking legislation like the Lilly Ledbettter Fair Pay Act. When it comes to wooing women's votes for

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the GOP, there's a lot of damage control to do.

Feminists are understandably horrified—the movement we've fought so hard for is suddenly being appropriated by the very people who are trying to dismantle it. But this co-opting hasn't happened in a vacuum; the mainstream feminist movement's instability and stalled ideology have made stealing it that much easier. The failure of feminists to prop up the next generation of activists, and the focus on gender as the sole requisite for feminism, has led to a crisis of our own making.

Conservative women have been trying to steal feminism for more than a decade—organizations like the Independent Women's Forum and Feminists for Life have long fought for antiwomen policies while identifying themselves as the "real" feminists. But their "prowoman" messaging didn't garner national attention until actual feminists paved the way for them in the 2008 presidential election. During the Democratic primary, feminist icons and leaders of mainstream women's organizations insisted that the only acceptable vote was for Hillary Clinton; female Barack Obama supporters were derided as traitors or chided for their naïveté. I even heard from women working in feminist organizations who kept mum on their vote for fear of losing their jobs. Perhaps most representative of the internal strife was a *New York Times* op-ed (and the fallout that followed) by Gloria Steinem in which the icon wrote, "Gender is probably the most restricting force in American life."

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Soon after, Melissa Harris-Lacewell, an associate professor of politics and African-American studies at Princeton University, responded in a *Democracy Now!* segment, "Part of what, again, has been sort of an anxiety for African-American women feminists like myself is that we're often asked to join up with white women's feminism, but only on their own terms, as long as we sort of remain silent about the ways in which our gender, our class, our sexual identity doesn't intersect, as long as we can be quiet about those things and join onto a single agenda."

The argument was not a new one—women of color and younger feminists have often taken white second-wave feminists to task for focusing on gender inequities over a more intersectional approach that also takes race, class and sexuality into account. But this intrafeminist skirmish over identity politics took on a life of its own in the aftermath of the bitter primary struggle. By pushing a vote for Clinton on the basis of her gender alone, establishment feminists not only rehashed internal grievances—they opened the door for conservatives to demand support for Palin for the very same reason. Unwittingly, the feminist argument for Clinton gave credence to the GOP's hope that the mere presence of a female on the ticket would deliver women's votes.

Is it any wonder, then, that everyone from Palin's supporters to the mainstream media was eager to paint the vice presidential candidate as a feminist? If all it took was being a woman, well, then Palin was it! The *Wall Street Journal* called it "Sarah Palin Feminism." The *New York Post* called her "a feminist dream," while the *Los Angeles Times* ran a piece headlined "Sarah Palin's 'New Feminism' Is Hailed."

In much the same way Obama-supporting feminists were criticized, women who didn't back Palin were swiftly denounced as hypocrites by those on the right. Rick Santorum called Palin the "Clarence Thomas for feminists," blasting women who didn't support her. Janice Shaw Crouse of Concerned Women for America said, "Even feminists—who supposedly promote women's equality and the so-called 'women's rights' agenda—are questioning a female candidate's ability to get the job done." The criticism of women who failed to back Palin even indulged in sexism. Dennis Miller said that women who weren't behind Palin were simply jealous of the candidate's sex life, and *Time* magazine reporter Belinda Luscombe wrote that some women had a "hatred" for Palin simply because she was "too pretty." (My favorite, however, was Kevin Burke's argument in *National Review* that women who didn't support Palin were suffering from "post-abortion symptoms.") Palin even managed to divide some feminists. Elaine Lafferty—a former editor of *Ms.* magazine who had endorsed Clinton but then signed on as a consultant to the McCain campaign—condemned feminist leaders for "sink[ing] this low" and called feminism an "exclusionary club" for not welcoming Palin with open arms.

If there was ever proof that the feminist movement needs to leave gender essentialism at the door—this is it. If powerful feminists continue to insist that gender matters above all else, the movement will become meaningless. If any woman can be a feminist simply because of her gender, then the right will continue to use this faux feminism to advance conservative values and roll back women's rights.

Ensuring feminism's future doesn't stop at embracing intersectionality—we must also shine a spotlight on the real feminists. Part of the reason Palin and her cohort are so successful at positioning themselves as the "new" women's movement is because we fail to push forward and support new feminists of our own. This is not to say that younger women aren't at the forefront of the movement—they certainly are. But their work is often made invisible by an older generation of feminists who prefer to believe young women are apathetic rather than admitting their movement is shifting into something they don't recognize and can't control.

For example, in an April *Newsweek* article about young people's supposed apathy over reproductive rights, NARAL Pro-Choice America President Nancy Keenan suggested that it was only the "postmenopausal militia" on the front lines of reproductive justice. Yet when I asked a NARAL spokesperson about employee demographics, I was told that people younger than 35 make up around 60 percent of the organization. And when they're not ignored, young feminists are painted as vapid and sexualized. Take feminist writer Debra Dickerson, who wrote in a 2009 *Mother Jones* article that today's feminists are all about "pole-dancing, walking around half-naked, posting

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drunk photos on Facebook and blogging about [their] sex lives." This insistence that a new wave doesn't exist or isn't worth paying attention to has left open the cultural space for antifeminist women like O'Donnell and Palin to swoop in and lay claim to the movement.

If the new wave of feminists—the leaders of small grassroots organizations across the country, the bloggers who are organizing hundreds of thousands of women online, the advocates for reproductive justice, racial equality and queer rights—aren't recognized as the real advocates for women, then the future of the movement will be lost.

Women vote for their interests—not their gender or age—but they still want to see themselves represented. If the only young women Americans see identified as "feminists" are those on the right, we run the risk of losing the larger cultural battle and the many younger women who are seeking an answer to the mixed messages about what feminism really is. And frankly, if we position vibrant young activists front and center, there will be no question as to who is creating the best change for women.

So instead of wringing our hands every time a new female candidate with distinctly antiwoman policies pops up, let's use it as an opportunity to re-establish what feminism is about and to support the up-and-comers in our midst. Let's focus on building power for the new wave of feminists by giving money to the organizations that best represent the future of the movement (like SAFER, NY Abortion Access Fund and Girls for Gender Equity); by providing media training and placing young activists on television and in the op-ed pages (as the great Women's Media Center does); and by pushing young feminists—not just women—to run for office.

Feminism isn't simply about being a woman in a position of power. It's battling systemic inequities; it's a social justice movement that believes sexism, racism and classism exist and interconnect, and that they should be consistently challenged. What's most important to remember as we fight back against conservative appropriation is that the battle over who "owns" the movement is not just about feminists; feminism's future affects all American women. And if we let the lie of conservative feminism stand—if real feminists don't lay claim to the movement and outline their vision for the future—all of us will suffer. ■

Herding Donkeys

Grassroots activists and Beltway insiders fight for the soul of Obama's Democratic Party.

by ARI BERMAN

A month after the 2008 election, Barack Obama summoned his Democratic Party chair-in-waiting, Virginia Governor Tim Kaine, to Chicago and explained how his presidency and party could prosper going forward.

"How many presidents have tried to meaningfully tackle healthcare?" Obama asked Kaine, who would soon replace outgoing party chair Howard Dean.

"Every Democrat since Truman," Kaine responded.

"How about energy reform?" Obama continued.

"I remember Nixon saying we were importing too much foreign oil, and now we import three times as much," Kaine replied.

"So if they didn't succeed," Obama asked rhetorically, "was it because they weren't smart enough?"

"No, they were smart," Kaine answered.

"Was it because they didn't know the ways of Washington?" Obama followed up, pressing his point like a vintage constitutional law professor.

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"No, they knew the ways of Washington," Kaine added.

"So if I try to do these heavy lifts just like they did, what are my chances?" Obama wondered.

"Pretty much zero," Kaine responded.

"Yeah, so what we have to do is figure out a different way to do it," Obama answered.

"If you just rely on your inside-the-Beltway savvy," Kaine agreed, "that's never going to be enough to make fundamental and important changes, because the forces of inertia inside the Beltway are just going to get in your way."

They both concluded that preserving what Kaine called the "outside-the-Beltway popular muscle" that defined Obama's campaign would be an essential ingredient for the new president's success.

At the same time, a debate raged inside the Obama coalition over the future shape of the president-elect's powerful campaign arm. Obama organizing veterans Steve Hildebrand and Marshall Ganz pushed for an independent organization that would be able to pressure Democrats to support the president's agenda and act, at least theoretically, separate from the White House. But most influential Obama advisers, led by former Obama campaign manager David Plouffe, saw the Democratic National Committee as its natural home. An independent entity would needlessly antagonize Democrats

Ari Berman is a Nation *contributing writer. This article is adapted from* Herding Donkeys: The Fight to Rebuild the Democratic Party and Reshape American Politics, *published this month by Farrar, Straus and Giroux.* *Copyright © 2010 by Ari Berman. All rights reserved.*

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and be difficult to structure for legal and financial reasons, they argued. Plouffe and company also didn't want it to seem like Obama's re-election campaign was starting the day after his election. In the end, Obama for America became Organizing for America—a quasi-autonomous entity within the DNC. OFA promised to change the very nature of governance in Washington, bringing millions of politically savvy Obama supporters into the legislative process and building an unprecedented, people-powered army that could thwart the entrenched power of wealthy corporate interests.

In the early days of Obama's presidency, it really did feel as if a new day was upon us: Obama passed a massive stimulus bill with ease, presented an entirely different America to the world and effortlessly swatted flies in the middle of TV interviews. These glimmers of hope, however, soon gave way to the harsh realities of governing. During the fight over healthcare reform, the same old intransigencies came back into play. As top Democrats wavered over whether to support a public insurance option and negotiations broke down behind closed doors, ascendant Tea Party activists hijacked the debate in the summer of 2009, screaming about death panels and socialized medicine and comparing Obama to Mao/Hitler/Stalin.

'The Obama people ran the best campaign I've seen in all my life.... But they couldn't translate it into government.' —Howard Dean

"In the whole period in which we didn't know what Obama was for and nobody was mobilizing or asked to mobilize, it created this huge vacuum," says Ganz, an expert on community organizing at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. "So the Teabaggers came in and filled it up." Democrats initially dismissed this sudden outbreak of right-wing rage, but the new regime in Washington seemed powerless to stop it. Virtually overnight, the enduring Democratic majority appeared just as fleeting as Karl Rove's master plan for the Republican Party.

In states across the country, from North Carolina to Indiana to Colorado, the feeling of euphoria that followed Obama's campaign is now a distant memory. The anti-incumbent rage among voters that threw Republicans out of office and put Obama in the White House has not dissipated since Democrats took charge of Washington. In fact, with the economy still limping and little getting done inside the corridors of power, voter angst has only increased—the principal reason Democrats are in such trouble with the midterm elections rapidly approaching.

Obama and his followers, such a potent force during the presidential campaign, are no longer the stars of the moment. "The Obama people ran the best campaign I've seen in all my life in politics," says Howard Dean. "But they couldn't translate it into government." Nearly two years after his historic election, what has become of Obama's famed movement? Where is its leader?

Obama's movement did not begin on the steps of the old state capitol in Springfield, Illinois; it began in the governor's mansion in sleepy Montpelier, Vermont. Howard Dean, the five-term governor of one of the country's tiniest states, entered the Democratic presidential primary in 2003 because he wanted to talk about a balanced budget and healthcare reform. But after he became the first major candidate to denounce the war in Iraq and aggressively challenge the Bush administration, his campaign, quickly and unexpectedly, became much bigger than that—an experiment with a new kind of politics aimed at revitalizing American democracy, reviving the Democratic Party and ending the Republican Party's electoral dominance.

Dean's run for the presidency embraced and amplified a few unique notions that profoundly altered modern American politics, namely, that committed volunteers are cheaper and more effective than the same old crew of professional campaign consultants; that small donations in large numbers can do more than large donations in small numbers; that the Internet and new social networking tools can level the playing field for seemingly quixotic candidacies and attract hordes of new people into politics for the first time; and that Democrats needed to compete everywhere (including in the hinterlands of long-forgotten red state America), stand up for some core principles and stick with them. The cause was as much about the means of doing politics as the ends. Dean and his followers fervently believed that the Democratic Party could still be fundamentally reformed, and they focused their activism toward that end. This spontaneous new insurgency—a response to the corporatization and triangulation of the Clinton era—wasn't about left versus right as much as outside versus in. The soul of the party and the future of politics were suddenly up for grabs. Dean certainly did not intend to become a catalyst for these changes, but that's where his campaign ended up.

That campaign ended after Dean's disastrous loss in the 2004 Iowa caucus—punctuated by his world-famous, media-generated "scream"—but a year later, when he became chair of the Democratic Party in a stunning turn of events, he really did help restore party fortunes in all those states he shouted out on that chaotic caucus night. Barack Obama continued that revival three years later, in the midst of an endless primary that everyone originally expected would end with Hillary Clinton's nomination. So many of those red states, like Indiana and North Carolina and Virginia, long regarded as enemy territory by Democrats, ended up holding the key to the party's electoral resurrection. Dean saw this trend before nearly anybody, and he got a second chance to do something about it as chair of the DNC.

The Dean campaign provided the manual—albeit a messy, imperfect one—for a bottom-up mass movement, and his fifty-state strategy provided the foundation for electing Democrats across the map in 2006 and 2008. The Obama campaign proved it was willing and able to perfect both of these visionary ideas. In the wake of John the Baptist, Jesus came forth. Some even called Obama "Dean 2.0."

Yet after the election, Obama quickly dispatched the insur-

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gents—Dean chief among them, who was excluded from a plum job—and assembled an administration that looked surprisingly like a third Clinton term. Today the parallels with President Clinton are even eerier; as in 1994, Obama is presiding unevenly over an unwieldy Democratic majority and facing the prospect of an avalanche of losses in his first midterm election.

Despite locating OFA in the DNC, changing the Democratic Party didn't rank as Obama's foremost priority. He had more pressing problems on his plate—not least, digging the country out of its worst economic crisis in decades. In those critical days following the election, OFA opted largely to circumvent the party rather than enhance it. On November 5, 2008, the DNC's nearly 200 local organizers, the core of Dean's fifty-state strategy, awoke to the news that their contracts were expiring at the end of the month. The e-mail from headquarters called it a "bitter-sweet moment." When Obama's DNC reconstituted Dean's strategy a few months later, funding OFA staffers across the country took priority. Unlike the organizers hired under Dean, who worked to strengthen the party at the state and local level, the new Obama organizers were instructed to focus strictly on helping to pass the president's legislative agenda, forming a parallel structure to the existing party. "I'm not trying to build a bigger and better Democratic Party," says Colorado OFA director Gabe Lifton-Zoline.

Dean's strategy decentralized power away from Washington, but under Obama, Washington once again calls the shots.

You couldn't really blame Obama for not wanting to take full ownership of the Democratic Party, given its status as a perennial punch line—the Buffalo Bills of politics. He was following a long line of historical precedent. Republican presidents routinely sought to strengthen their parties, while Democratic presidents tended to ignore them, Northwestern University political scientist Daniel Galvin observes. But the president, Galvin argues in his book *Presidential Party Building*, neglects his party at his peril. If it atrophies too much, Obama will find himself in a situation similar to that of Clinton following the disastrous '94 midterms, facing an increasingly hostile Congress and unable to push through the bold legislative agenda he campaigned on.

Democratic Party officials, as much as they want Obama to succeed and see their fates largely determined by his success, point out that they have additional responsibilities, ranging from candidates for governor to county commissioner. That's why party strategists believe it's so critical to bring independents, Republicans and first-time Obama supporters into the fold. Reagan Democrats, after all, became Republicans after the 1980 and 1984 campaigns. "There's probably not a more front-and-center issue for the Democratic Party than that," says Obama pollster Cornell Belcher. "You'd think they'd build infrastructure at the grassroots level within the party to work that very diverse and younger constituency." One former high-ranking member of Obama's campaign describes OFA as a "massive fucking power grab" that siphons much-needed resources away from the party. (There are some notable exceptions; in Texas, for example, the OFA investment in local organizing is much larger than in recent years. And this past June, the DNC launched a $50 million outreach effort to persuade first-time Obama voters—and register new ones—to go to the polls in the upcoming midterms.)

Dean's strategy decentralized power away from Washington, but under Obama, Washington once again calls the shots. "The DNC is just not as energized and connected to local activism as it was under Howard Dean," says Margaret Johnson, former Democratic chair in Polk County, North Carolina. After the election, pundits predicted that Obama's DNC would launch a "fifty-state strategy on steroids," but in some places—especially outside the typical battlegrounds—it feels more like the fifty-state strategy on Ambien.

The state chairs now receive far less money than they did under Dean and are struggling to pay the bills. One chair called the $5,000 monthly stipend the state parties eventually got "money to shut us up." "If we had what we previously had," says Idaho state chair Keith Roark, "we'd be in far better shape." The gains of the fifty-state strategy are by no means permanent, the chairs warn, and can evaporate as quickly as they accumulated. Indeed, in Obama's first year, the party lost three straight major elections, in states the president had won by six, sixteen and twenty-six points. In Virginia, New Jersey and Massachusetts, Obama's "coalition of the ascendant"—blacks, Hispanics, young people—failed to turn out in large numbers for the Democratic candidates. With the midterms a month away, Democrats are struggling to defend vulnerable incumbents across the map.

Marshall Ganz, a devotee of Cesar Chavez and the civil rights movement, was the closest thing to an organizing theorist behind the Obama movement. He mentored young organizers who became the backbone of Obama's campaign and trained hundreds of new activists. Ganz hoped, after the election, that these organizers would fundamentally alter the way business got done in Washington. Instead, he watched OFA assemble in secret and the Obama administration squander, in his view, an enormous opportunity to engage its grassroots base in the months after the election. In August 2009, five days after Ted Kennedy's death, Ganz and Occidental College political science professor Peter Dreier enumerated their critique in a *Washington Post* op-ed titled, "We Have the Hope. Now Where's the Audacity?"

"The White House and its allies forgot that success requires more than proposing legislation, negotiating with Congress and polite lobbying," Dreier and Ganz wrote. "It demands movement-building of the kind that propelled Obama's long-shot candidacy to an almost landslide victory." The institutions that were supposed to channel the movement, mainly OFA, "failed to keep up," they wrote. The administration, they contended, "confused marketing with movement-building."

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In December 2008 Dean described his vision for Obama's DNC. "I'd like the DNC to now mature into a two-way communication between ordinary Americans who want to influence their government and the president of the United States," he said. The Obama campaign, after all, was premised on the idea that the people who elected him would have a say in running the country. "I will ask for your service and your active citizenship when I am president of the United States," Obama said while campaigning in Colorado Springs in July 2008. "This won't be a call issued in one speech or one program; I want this to be a central cause of my presidency." Only Obama entered the White House with millions of supporters who could theoretically be activated with the click of a mouse; they expected him, however naïvely, to follow through on his promise. "Our signs didn't say, Status Quo '08," remarked former top Obama adviser Paul Tewes.

Unfortunately, that White House dialogue has too often been one-sided: Here's the policy. Go support it. "The White House began to believe that they could mobilize their supporters without hearing what their supporters really wanted in terms of specific change," Dean says. "The principal problem with OFA is the same one the president's having. You can't dictate to your base what's going to happen. It's got to be a two-way deal, and it hasn't been."

OFA operates under the assumption that the president's policy is always the best possible one. But what about when it isn't? What are Obama's supporters to do then? They are told to sell the policy, but they can't influence the shaping of the product. "There's a certain hubris among the people around Obama in the White House that they were above the fray and didn't have to pay attention to the base," says Iowa Senator Tom Harkin. "Certainly a president has to govern from the middle, but you've got to reassure your base that what they did and how hard they worked was worth something." Much of the tension can be traced back to White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel, a consummate Beltway insider, who replaced David Plouffe, the Obama inner circle's past conduit to the grassroots, as the central figure in Obama's orbit.

Obama's organizers on the inside, like OFA deputy field director Jeremy Bird—a 32-year-old alumnus of the Dean and Obama campaigns and a disciple of Ganz's—find themselves in an unfamiliar position. Like it or not, they are tied to Washington's governing establishment. Bird insists that he still doesn't "feel part of the DC pundit, insider crowd" and spends as much time as possible outside the Beltway. In its first year, OFA held 937 listening tours by staff in 600 cities across fifty states. Concerns from activists around the country are transmitted back to the White House political department on an ongoing basis. "I know that Obama cares about that," Bird says. But despite the best of Bird's efforts to stay in sync with Obama's grassroots base, he takes his cues from the White House. "You can run a grassroots political movement out of the DNC, inside the Beltway," Tim Kaine loftily proclaims. But such an aspiration, even Kaine admits, sounds awfully like an oxymoron.

OFA now feels more like any other advocacy organization and less like a movement or Obama's groundbreaking campaign. It turns out that grassroots organizing and Washington sausage-making blend about as well as vodka and milk. "It's no coincidence that some of us who are organizers didn't go into the White House," says former Obama field director Temo Figueroa. "I would've been fired in the first fucking month." OFA was meant to blend the two worlds, but it often floats in a political no man's land, tethered to a Washington establishment yet unable to change it. Critics like Ganz suspect that is by design. The White House doesn't want its activists to disrupt the backroom deals its aides cut with lobbyists and legislators, nor does it want them putting too much pressure on obstructionist Democrats, lest it alienate key swing votes in Congress. When MoveOn.org ran ads targeting conservative Democrats who were blocking healthcare reform, Rahm Emanuel memorably called the ads "fucking retarded." And, indeed, the White House has expended considerable political capital denouncing the "professional left" and defending apostate Democrats like Blanche Lincoln in Arkansas from insurgent primary challengers, which has further undermined Obama's reformist brand.

> 'There's a core philosophy inside the administration of avoiding conflict.... That's not how you run a movement.' —Marshall Ganz

"I'm not looking to pick another fight with Rahm Emanuel, but the contempt with which he held the progressive wing of the party was devastating and incredibly demoralizing," Dean says. "That's basically saying to your own people, You got us here, now F-you." The progressive voices Emanuel excluded from Obama's inner circle included Dean himself, who famously clashed with the chief of staff over how and where Democrats should spend their limited resources in 2006. Emanuel's elevation—and Dean's snub—has come to signify a broader abandonment of the party's grassroots base, especially as Obama packed his White House with well-worn veterans of previous administrations, quite an irony given his critique of Hillary during the primary as a washed-up Washington insider. The top-down structure of Obama's administration is the virtual opposite of his campaign. This strikes Dean and Ganz as an odd calculation. His supporters, Obama always said, were his most powerful asset. So why doesn't he unleash them?

"I definitely think he tried to extend a new model of campaigning into a new model of governing," says White House transition chief John Podesta. "By that, I mean his decision-making, his openness, his attempt at broader-based participation, his desire to cool off the intense partisanship in Washington.... But at the end of the day, the Washington culture is pretty hard to change. So they defaulted to a position that looks and feels a little more like what we experienced in the '90s."

If a president can't lead a movement from the White House, Ganz argues, he can at least encourage its development on

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the outside, as Reagan did with the New Right. "It takes two hands to make a clapping noise," he says. "Inside and outside. If inside is put in charge of outside, then there's no more outside. The very sources of power that put you there in the first place begin to evaporate." But Obama's White House has never felt comfortable with both worlds or fully explored the possibility of governing in a fundamentally different way, despite Obama's initial conversation with Kaine after the election. "There's a core philosophy inside the administration of avoiding conflict and trying to assert control," Ganz says. "That's not how you run a movement."

Former top campaign officials are watching with dismay as what Ganz once termed "the movement to elect Barack Obama," however opaque its policy goals, keeps contracting rather than expanding. "I think he has that network of people outside Washington behind him, but those are delicate relationships that, if not carefully maintained and put to good use, will atrophy over time," says former Obama new-media director Joe Rospars. In 2009 a million people joined Obama's vaunted campaign e-mail list of 13 million followers, according to Plouffe, but OFA refused to say if the number of people who chose to unsubscribe dwarfed the newcomers. "I haven't really done the math," Kaine replied when pressed on the numbers. "Obama's a learner," Ganz says. "He can still learn. The big question is: what's he learning from all this?"

The dramatic revival of healthcare reform following Scott Brown's upset Senate win in Massachusetts presented a perfect opportunity for Obama to regain his footing and recapture the magic of his campaign. As he successfully fought for passage of his signature domestic priority, the dynamic and forceful leader who inspired the masses on the campaign trail temporarily re-emerged. The last weeks of the healthcare debate—as Obama supporters made nearly 500,000 calls to members of Congress in the final ten days before the House vote—showed how effective OFA activists could be when Obama gave them something tangible to fight for. On the night of the House vote, Obama paid homage to his grassroots supporters and specifically credited "the untold numbers who knocked on doors and made phone calls, who organized and mobilized out of a firm conviction that change in this country comes not from the top down but from the bottom up."

Yet the celebration proved to be a fleeting one. Gridlock returned to Washington, oil gushed into the Gulf of Mexico and the economy remained stagnant. It's evident that the battle to reshape American politics didn't end after Obama's election, nor will it stop after another. And the future of the Democratic Party will not be fashioned inside the Beltway, no matter how much of an impact its decisions have on the rest of the country. It's not too late for Obama to turn his presidency and party around, but he'll need to start by re-inspiring his supporters and steadying them for the election in November and the long fight ahead. ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

United States to have a baby. They come for economic reasons mostly—responding to US recruitment and labor demand and seeking to use their US earnings to finance a project at home. They don't plan to stay very long, and would prefer to make a few trips of twelve months or less and return home.

This is exactly what happened from 1942 to 1964, when there was a large US guest-worker program, which at its peak, in the late 1950s, brought in some 450,000 Mexicans annually, mostly men, on temporary visas. There were no quotas, so Mexicans with ties north of the border could settle down. In the late '50s, settlement by legal immigrants ran at around 50,000 per year.

This changed in 1965, when Washington ended the guest-worker program and imposed quotas, closing off legal entry. Since US labor demand continued unabated, cross-border flows continued, with or without documents, and were overwhelmingly male and circular. From 1965 to '85 for every 100 entries there were eighty-five departures, yielding a small net inflow. Things changed again in 1986, when Congress criminalized the hiring of undocumented workers and required employers to inspect documents (which caused an immediate boom in fraudulent documents). The United States also began a two-decade militarization of the US-Mexico border.

The militarization of the border made crossing difficult, costly and risky, and rates of return migration plummeted. As male migrants spent more time north of the border, pressures for family reunification mounted, and women and children increasingly joined husbands and fathers.

The militarization of the border backfired by lengthening stays, diminishing rates of return and promoting permanent settlement rather than circulation. In the 1990s net undocumented immigration doubled, not because more people were coming in but because fewer were going back home; and those settling were increasingly bringing in families. When young, healthy, married men and women are united, they do what comes naturally: they have babies. Mexicans do not come here to have babies. They have babies here because men can no longer circulate freely back and forth from homes in Mexico to jobs in the United States. Husbands and wives quite understandably want to be together.

Not only are Mexicans not coming to have babies—they are not coming. According to estimates from a variety of sources, including Homeland Security's Office of Immigration Statistics, net undocumented migration fell to zero in 2008 and since then has been negative, with the undocumented population falling by around 1 million between 2008 and '09, including a drop of 100,000 in Arizona alone. Where labor demand has evaporated and hostility to immigrants is surging, Mexicans are not coming to drop "anchor babies" or for any other reason.

Douglas S. Massey, *co-director*
Mexican Migration Project;
Henry G. Bryant Professor of Sociology and Public Affairs, Princeton University

Liberal Innumeracy

Dan Bischoff's "Rand Paul's Kentucky Derby" [Sept. 27] cites 18,000 unionized coal miners in Kentucky. The correct number is 800.

Thomas Geoghegan, in "Ten Things Dems Could Do to Win" [Sept. 27], stated that the cap on the Social Security tax is at $90,000. The cap is at $106,800.

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Books & the Arts.

A Man of Enthusiasms

by MARIA MARGARONIS

Ben Sonnenberg, writer, publisher, boulevardier, incomparable friend to me and many others connected with this magazine, is at home in his apartment at 50 Riverside Drive. The room is intimate and understated (that helpful word, with its buried anagram of "taste"). The Hudson shines obliquely through the window. His long fingers are strapped flat to the arms of his chair, which he must move by blowing through a straw. If he could lean forward he would, but as it is all must be done with the face: the half-diffident smile, the wicked glint in the eye. "Did I ever tell you," he says, with a slight caressing drawl, "Did I ever tell you about the first time I felt the earth move? I was with Irene Papas." And the walls disappear, and Ben, young, agile, full of dash and promise, is stepping out into a Greek provincial square with his dark lover, hand in hand, and she is remembering the day the fascists killed her father, there, outside the town hall where he was the communist mayor, in the civil war… "That's where my father was shot," she says, and the ground begins to quake. "Now, it's a hotel."

"For the private individual," wrote Walter Benjamin, "the private environment represents the universe. In it he gathers remote places and the past. His drawing room is a box in the world theatre." When Ben first quoted those lines in his memoir, *Lost Property* (1991), he meant the many rooms of his father's mansion at 19 Gramercy Park, crowded with expensive furniture and art. Later, he used them to describe the way he drew the world to him through *Grand Street*, the quarterly he founded in 1981 and edited for nine years. But even without the magazine, Ben knew how to make one room an everywhere. For him everything was personal, and nothing merely so. He was intimate and elusive, urbane and vulnerable. When you were with him you felt you were the only one who mattered, the one he wanted to see, though his acquaintance was enormous and distinguished. I asked him once, surprised by some connection, if he knew everybody; he replied, with a hint of flattery to deflect any suspicion of unseemly self-regard, "Only the great, the talented, the good and the beautiful."

SYLVIA PLACHY

Ben Sonnenberg (December 30, 1936–June 24, 2010), with his dog Harry

It is difficult to describe the place that *Grand Street* held in the literary and political landscape of the 1980s. It was sui generis, eclectic and unclassified; it stood (as E.M. Forster said of Ben's beloved Cavafy) at a slight angle to the universe. At a time when celebrity culture was being dressed up as respectable in magazines like *Interview* and the revived *Vanity Fair*, when advertising revenues were on every editor's mind, when uncritical support for Israel had deformed the morals of a significant part of the intellectual left, *Grand Street* was incorruptible. Funded by the proceeds from Benjamin Sonnenberg *père*'s public relations business—and the engine of his son's final liberation from him—it kept blithely aloof from commerce and fashion, refusing to be dutiful or polite. Like all great magazines, it was the pure expression of its editor's sensibility: cosmopolitan, rebellious, sybaritic, recherché. Adept at irony (he had a recurring dream of being cut at a party by Henry James), Ben wasted no time worrying about the spurious contradiction between elite intellectual tastes and radical political ones. "In the end," writes Theodor Adorno, one of his guiding lights, "glorification of splendid underdogs is nothing other than glorification of the splendid system that makes them so." Ben published whom and what he liked, and if it happened to be beyond the reader's ken, then it was the reader's luck to have stumbled on something new.

Maria Margaronis writes from the London bureau of The Nation. *She would like to thank Alexander Cockburn, Arthur Danto, Richard Howard, Stuart Klawans, Daniel Menaker, Susan Minot, Victor Navasky, Elizabeth Pochoda, Mariam Said, Eleni Savidis, Deborah Thomas, Michael Train, Amy Wilentz and JoAnn Wypijewski for writing or talking to her about their memories of Ben Sonnenberg.*

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There was considerable traffic in the early days between *Grand Street* and *The Nation*, but *Grand Street* was never programmatic or polemical. "The quality of raised voices," Ben told *New York*, "is not attractive to me." Still, he commissioned groundbreaking essays that could not have appeared elsewhere: not in *The New Yorker*, not in *The New York Review of Books*, sometimes not in *The Nation*. Edward Said's "Canaanite Reading" of Michael Walzer's *Exodus and Revolution* unraveled a claim for the Exodus story as a paradigm for liberation by adducing the view of the Promised Land's previous inhabitants. John Hess's "The Culture Gulch of the *Times*" chronicled the Gray Lady's transformation into a painted strumpet for admen and flacks with the authority of one who had toiled for decades in her vineyards. Robert Sherrill wrote on corruption and corporate crime, Murray Kempton on betrayal, Andrew Kopkind on the distortions of the closet.

Grand Street's mystique began with its appearance: austere, restrained, Augustan. Each issue had the heft of a book, printed in hot type on heavy, creamy stock and bound in a solid color of a muted shade—"like Necco wafers, not Chuckles," in Daniel Menaker's phrase. The cover bore the contributors' names, in no discernible order, set in beautiful square Caledonia capitals: Alice Munro, Ann Carson, James Salter, Daniel Wolff; Raymond Carver, William Empson, Suzanne Ruta, William Trevor; Samuel Beckett, Amy Clampitt, Virgil Thomson, Nora Sayre; Richard Howard, E.M. Cioran, Yannis Ritsos, Elizabeth Jolley. Below, a billy goat stood atop a rocky crag, head lowered, hooves four-square, "an emblem," Ben explained, "of obstinacy, omnivorousness, capriciousness." Inside, there was little guidance for the reader unaccustomed to such respect: stories, poems and essays followed one another at will, unmarked as to genre, unpackaged, unalloyed.

Grand Street's circulation never exceeded 5,000. But if you were a certain sort of writer in New York in those days, you wanted desperately to join this club, which you couldn't ask to enter and whose rules were never explained. To be invited to write for *Grand Street* (as I was only once) was to be aware of Ben's sharp eye and sharper expectations, and of the exalted company to which you were being, by some mistake or miracle, temporarily admitted. If you were a young unknown (and even, I suspect, if you were a well-known known), you felt you had to come up with something better than your best. Ben's critical faculties were not suspended once he'd taken you to his heart. A piece published elsewhere that he thought not up to scratch would be met with a loud silence or a finely barbed remark, which took some time to work its way beneath the skin. At the same time, his generosity was startling. Even after his illness made him give up *Grand Street*, he encouraged, suggested and praised; introduced kindred spirits; brokered coveted assignments. Above all he was present: Peter Pan in a wheelchair, an acerbic guardian angel who made it seem as if being forced to live vicariously was, in fact, a gift.

Grand Street was more than a magazine; more even than a salon. It was also an alembic for turning gold to life. Ben was a child of money: a collector's child. His father, born in Brest-Litovsk, worked his way from the Lower East Side to the corner of Gramercy Park by promoting the wealthy and the not-yet-famous. (He once told Victor Navasky that he could write a five-word ad guaranteed to hook his interest: "The truth about Victor

PRIVATE COLLECTION

Navasky.") Ben wrote, in perfect but perhaps unconscious anapests, "His business was public relations. Our house was a blush for that fact." In the beginning of *Lost Property*, Ben describes what it was like to grow up in that house, "a house of remarkable bathrooms," according to the *New York Times*, the finest of which reportedly led Tennessee Williams to say, "It looked so shabby when I took it out, I couldn't go." It wasn't enough for Ben; he pretended to a school friend that he lived at the Frick. This was partly to spite his parents, whose preoccupations suggested that he was "subordinate to Sheraton, second to George the Second"; he hated more their dishonest profession that their acquisitiveness served a practical purpose. He felt snubbed by the servants, too—"*real* English butlers and *real* Irish maids"—and wondered whether he or they were more dispensable. That experience of contempt gloved in obsequiousness may lie at the root of his lifelong love for disobedient dogs.

Raised on a stage set furnished with quotations, companioned by books, Ben lived allusively. He was Oscar Wilde; he was Julien Sorel. He was, above all, a bad boy. Spat out by three schools, he stole from his father, broke hearts like mere Meissen, ran up impossible bills at the best restaurants. He went to Europe—Italy, Greece, Spain, Berlin—where he was recruited for the CIA by a man he calls Merle Dankenbloom, settling Hungarian refugees in the United States. In search of a holster for his Chief's Special revolver, he confided to the gunsmith that most of his trousers were made only for suspenders. "When you wear a gun, you dress for the gun," came the unkind reply. In London in the '60s Ben worked at writing plays; his shirts were made by Kilgour, his jackets by H. Huntsman, his boots by C.J. Cleverly, who sent a man each week to clean them with the shin bone of a goat. He made friends with Ted Hughes (but not Sylvia Plath), with Bill and Dido Merwin, with the composer Elisabeth Lutyens and the theater director Minos Volanakis; he lunched (he boasted) with the Duchess of Devonshire. He had many lovers, whom he often treated badly. His long relationship with the writer Sally Belfrage ended badly too. Suddenly, it seems, in 1964, he married Wendy Adler, who was just 17; the following year their daughter Susanna was born, and they moved back to New York. None of this drama could free him from his father's shadow, the paradoxical burden of his shrinking trust fund or the paralyzing sense that "you always have to appraise, to appraise and to be not unworthy also of being appraised."

All this is related in *Lost Property*, in Ben's distinctive, dry, self-deprecating voice. (As it turned out, he was a brilliant writer, but he was far too sociable to confine himself to that, and to make too much of a fuss about it would have seemed somehow vulgar.) His Virgil for the memoir is Theodor Adorno, with Walter Benjamin as his pensive sidekick: two cultured, fearless, radical thinkers against themselves. After Ben died in June, I opened *Minima Moralia* (for the first time, I am ashamed to say) and found on the first page the following reflection: "The son of well-to-do parents who, whether from talent or weakness, engages in a so-called intellectual profession, as an artist or a scholar, will have a particularly difficult time with those bearing the distasteful title of colleagues." This, Adorno explains, is not only because the man's independence is envied and his motives mistrusted but because his gratuitous presence appears to repudiate the strict division of labor, imposed by

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society even on the life of the mind: "It is as if the class from which independent intellectuals have defected takes its revenge, by pressing its demands home in the very domain where the deserter seeks refuge."

How powerfully these lines must have resonated for Ben, who spent years trying to slip like a ghost through the walls of privilege, to subvert it satirically (if not deliberately) by taking the performance of it to extremes. "Baudelaire saw with the dandy himself," he writes in *Lost Property*, "that the need to be odd, at whatever the cost, is finally a heroic shape taken in their decadence by leisure and inherited wealth." Insubordinate and fastidious, waspish and endearing, tender, funny, ironic and littered with famous names, Ben's memoir is the Indian rope trick that enabled his escape. In it he turns his not inconsiderable sharpness (a favorite construction of his, that double negative of nice distinctions and faint praise) deftly against himself. As it unfolds it becomes more poignant, even celebratory. It is the verbal trace of a man shedding his skin.

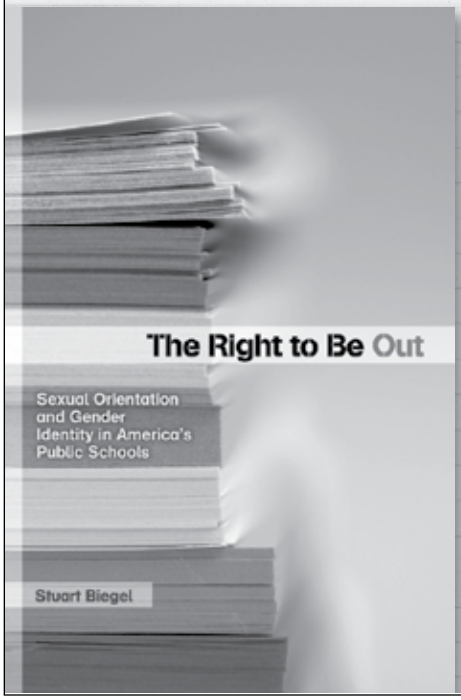
The opening sections of *Lost Property* first appeared in *The Nation* in 1979. Ben had begun writing reviews for Elizabeth Pochoda, the literary editor whose assistant I later became, mostly of books about the theater, his first love. These are self-consciously aphoristic, unashamedly abstruse, encrusted with references: they place things, smartly, carefully, in their right context and rank. They do not eschew words like "banausic," "tergiversation" and "concinnity." They are also full of exact insights that, like all the best criticism, reveal something of their author's own preoccupations. Of Witter Bynner, a now almost forgotten friend of Robert Frost's: "He makes his mark with lethal acts of indelible levity." Of the aerialist Philippe Petit (quoting Ned Rorem): "He lacks eroticism, vulnerability." (Ben lacked neither.) Of the connoisseur Bernard Berenson: "Berenson's reputation combined the fever of large sums of money with the emollient of superfine taste in a double erotic character: that of adulterer and of servitor of the very rich, both roles needing complaisance." Berenson's life, Ben goes on, exemplifies a fear of the nineteenth century's prohibition against personal transformation: "He attempted a sort of appeasement, particularly in his excessive, painful and exhausting habits of work, by insistently offering the prospect of conversion into capital of the pleasures of looking at pictures." Two years after this review appeared, Ben published the first issue of *Grand Street*, through which he aimed to convert capital into pleasure.

Ben's father died in 1978. The mansion at 19 Gramercy Park was sold, leaving Ben and his sister in control of "a fairly large sum." By then Ben had three daughters. Two marriages were behind him, as was a long relationship with the film critic he calls in his memoir "Sophie Zevon Clumber." The multiple sclerosis he had diagnosed in himself when he was 34 was making it difficult to walk. He bought the apartment at 50 Riverside Drive; he met and married the writer Dorothy Gallagher. His new life—the life of the Ben I came to know—began.

Grand Street reflected all of Ben's eclectic interests: stories, music, Greece, politics, the relationship between art and money; poetry, often of a formal strain; strands of European high culture; passages from the eccentric ways of the old haute bourgeoisie; criticism and high-octane literary gossip. (William Carlos Williams, writing to Ezra Pound in St. Elizabeth's Hospital: "Why have you never protested against Eliot and his gleet?") The magazine began as a cabinet of curiosities in which Ben could display the talents of his friends—Ted Hughes sent poems for the first issue, blessing it, as Ben said, with his "beneficence"; Penelope Gilliatt contributed a memoir of Northumberland, "a bony version of Greece"—and rapidly became a means for making new ones. He wooed writers he admired and discouraged those he didn't with finely chiseled notes ("Dear Harold, I like your poems so little that…").

Most editors talk about nurturing new talent. Ben actually did it, with all the literary and material means at his disposal. He read with real attention and he paid real money, affording writers the privilege to which he was born and later condemned: time and space to think, at leisure and with care. Some of his protégées were beautiful young women. Ben loved women, always, the more beautiful, the better, but he did not diminish them. "He let younger women be featured, he allowed them to matter," says Amy Wilentz, who wrote for him on Haiti and feels now that he gave her her career. Susan Minot worked with him on some of the stories that became her first novel, *Monkeys*. "I was her accompanist," Ben writes in *Lost Property*, "essential but subordinate. *Her* performance, not mine, was the thing." Susan, a close friend until the end, remembers it slightly differently: "He was very sure about what he liked; he could be very withering when you chose to keep something he

Out at School



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thought not good." Stuart Klawans, who also published short fiction in *Grand Street*, recalls Ben's editing thus: "Ben had noticed a few places where the writing could be a bit more, well… Did I remember the nocturnal scene in *Lolita* where Nabokov describes the taillights of a car as 'anal jewels'? Perhaps I could manage to work up a little of *that*."

Grand Street played its part in the short story boom of the '80s alongside *The New Yorker* and *The Paris Review*, but it was far more open and idiosyncratic. There was no such thing as a "*Grand Street* story," none of the cultishness associated with powerful gurus like *Esquire*'s Gordon Lish. Ben had no qualms about taking work turned down by *The New Yorker*—a fertile stream that brought him stories by, among others, Alice Munro, Daniel Menaker and indeed Susan Minot. But he also published fiction that would never have been considered for those glossy pages, even in the more liberal reign of Robert Gottlieb. Like an eighteenth-century duchess with a taste for libertinage, *Grand Street* could accommodate all sorts under its decorous covers: the whimsical, the eccentric, the gnomic, the erotic. Ben loved evocations of pleasure and its dark inner lining. Steven Millhauser's "Snowmen" invents airy, ephemeral sculptures that transfigure a neighborhood; Kent Haruf's "The Autopsy of Sam Adams" carefully details the dismembering of a horse. "For me, as doubtless for many men," Ben wrote in *Lost Property*, "a love of literature began in masturbation and was linked to pornography." He stayed true to that insight and to its refined expression in European letters; Harry Mathews's story "Singular Pleasures" is an American riff on that venerable tradition.

In fiction and nonfiction, Ben gave his writers room to stretch, to divagate and take risks. It was for Ben that Christopher Hitchens reflected on his family and the discovery that his grandmother was Jewish; for Ben that Alexander Cockburn revealed his tenderer aspect in a touching memoir about visiting his old school, complete with digressions on fatherhood, Anglo-Irish attitudes and the ablative absolute. Such assignments could nudge careers from their accustomed tack. The philosopher Arthur Danto says that Ben definitively changed his life by inviting him to write for *Grand Street* and introducing him to Elizabeth Pochoda at *The Nation*: "I certainly would never have become an art critic but for him."

Through it all ran a distinct and powerful red thread. Beyond his affection for Adorno and Benjamin, beyond his distaste for and recoil from life in Gramercy Park ("I became a Socialist," he writes, "in objection to my father"), the source of Ben's political affinities remains somewhat obscure. His sensibility was too fine-grained for public concerns to drive it; political views are also a way of claiming or accounting for one's position in the world. In *Lost Property* he describes a recurring anxiety about his allegiances. As a young man he worried about whether he could be seen as a Serious Person:

> My own notion of such a person came first from Silone and Sartre, then from Gramsci and Fanon; and I knew that I wasn't serious because (a) I wasn't wretched, poor or oppressed, (b) I couldn't work with a group, (c) I liked mischief and (d) I was drawn "fatally," as I put it, to women.

When Irene Papas asked him if he was "an Amerrican" and warned that she was a communist, Ben assured her that he was a communist, too: "But if she'd said she was a Royalist, I'd have said I was one of those."

It was in part Ben's love for Greece and Greeks (a central theme of our friendship) that gave his rebelliousness a local habitation. Papas and Volanakis engaged him in the struggle against the Colonels' dictatorship, supported by the CIA, in the late 1960s: "I felt more attached to that cause than to any in America. 'That Greece might still be free!'" That it had also been Byron's cause didn't hurt; nor did the way the Greeks went about such things, or the fact that it was, in America, a minority concern. (Ben loathed mass protest and the American student movement. His old friend Michael Train remembers him asking Bill Merwin with disgust, "Did you get *anything* out of the '60s?") But after the dictatorship ended, Ben kept serious faith with my beleaguered country. He regularly published essays on Greek writers and translations of their work (including James Merrill's versions of Cavafy's poems and prose), much of it previously unknown to English-speaking readers.

Later, partly because of his connection with *The Nation*, Ben was drawn into the circles of New York's intellectual left. Through Hitchens and Cockburn he met Edward Said, whom he loved fiercely and to whom he spoke on the telephone almost every day, about politics, about literature, about music, about tweeds. But his political sympathies were not the mere result of influence and chance. They were rooted, I think, in his immense capacity to delight in other people, his intolerance for bullshit, his sense that all received ideas are debased and therefore false, his bred-in-the-bone enthusiasm for making all kinds of trouble.

There was also, of course, his illness, which was both the first and the last thing one noticed about Ben. Struck by his immobility, one forgot it instantly. He rarely spoke or wrote about it (Dorothy did, in her memoir *Strangers in the House*, with the unsparing lightness that Ben so admired), but it colored his life more deeply than the temporarily well can even begin to imagine. "If a fly landed on his nose there was nothing he could do about it," Michael Train wrote to me. It should have been obvious, but it never occurred to me; nor did the million other things that slowly became impossible. When he could no longer turn pages, friends came to read to him. Richard Howard was one; they began with Byron's *Don Juan*, in its entirety, over a long series of Sunday afternoons. "Well, that was a real education," Ben said when they were done.

As time went on Ben seemed to have more and more sympathy with those of us who weren't famous, who remained irrevocably trammeled by the ordinary. He understood and was drawn to the qualities that hold people back: diffidence, doubt, an excess of negative capability. Ben, though, was extraordinary. To take his father's money and give it away, not hoard it as a secret source of self-esteem; to turn it to living use, not as philanthropy but in a way that implicated the deepest part of himself; to risk it for connection and mutual transformation; to break out of his father's house—all that would have taken rare courage, talent and recklessness even without the paralysis that was turning him to stone as he breathed life into the statues. At *Grand Street*'s core was a profound and fruitful tension: it represented a revolt against good taste by true discernment and delight. As such it could not be didactic, or tendentious, or ingratiating. (What a strain it must have been for Ben, who wanted so much, I realize now, to be admired and loved, to be too proud to be ingratiating.) That was the source of its energy and its mysterious aloofness, its refusal to define itself and its originality. Like all great magazines, it was ephemeral; Ben knew when it was time to let it go. ■

Ink

I am the Angel of Death.
I have come to confess.

JESSE NATHAN

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SHELF LIFE

by STEVE EVANS

TRANCE STATES ARE MENTAL EPI-sodes poised at the perilous border between consciousness and insensibility, volition and hallucination. Deemed aberrant from the standpoint of wakeful, rational intelligence intent on the business of problem-solving, these liminal states are, as David Lewis-Williams argues in his fascinating if highly speculative study *The Mind of the Cave: Consciousness and the Origins of Art*, an ineradicable fact of human cognition and may have played a role in the emergence of the specifically "human" form of consciousness first signaled by the cave art of the Upper Paleolithic period some 40,000 years ago. Like dreams and drugs, trance experiences are a perpetual source for the trans- and nonrational explorations of poets, a means of provoking the "systematic derangement of the senses" prized by Rimbaud.

Alice Notley has employed self-induced trance techniques in the composition of most of the volumes following her visionary quest poem *Descent of Alette* (1996). Her new book, *Reason and Other Women* (Chax; $21), takes its title from Christine de Pizan's fifteenth-century proto-feminist utopia, *La Cité des Dames*, in which "Reason," along with her friends "Justice" and "Rectitude," assists the author in the construction of an allegorical city where upstanding women from history and fable serve as the building blocks. The art and architecture of the Byzantine period are also in evidence, ranging in scale from the vast, intricate basilica that supplies Notley with her book's overarching structural analogy to the individual tiles of the mosaic icons that decorate the imaginary basilica's walls.

A stabbing intensity, quickened by frequent shifts in mode of address, pulses through Notley's ultralong lines and boundless-seeming stanzas; based on factors and multiples of six, the stanzas often stretch to eighteen and even twenty-four lines of more than ninety characters each, creating a *festina lente* tempo that races along at a glacial pace. Each poem records, with an insistence on fidelity that leaves keyboard mis-strikes intact, the poet's experience of descent into a trancelike state where situations unfold before the mind's eye with an unsettling quasi objectivity; though "unreal," they are not mere figments of her imagination. The phantasmal scenes of what she calls "the second world"—which, in contrast to the quotidian "first world," knows neither causality nor linear temporality—are host to fleeting patterns, as characters twin, double, divide, antagonize and lavish care on one another before dissolving back into an ever renewing wave of affect and action flecked by the kaleidoscopic hues of Notley's mental palette.

MATT VALENTINE

Alice Notley

IF THE DENSELY COVERED SHEETS OF what I'm tempted to call Notley's "trance-scriptions" were reduced to their barest minimum, the distillate might be the kind of poem found in Andrew Joron's *Trance Archive: New and Selected Poems* (City Lights; $14.95), which, moving by way of minuscule alterations in phonemic structure, seek to cast cerebral neo-Surrealist spells through multilayered, self-reflexive punning: "If there is a *floor*/It is a *flare*/too quick & too bright/to be trod upon.//Enter *here*/Inter *here*/—turn among/the torn, the Entire.//—a lexicon seems mysterious/Because it is inhabited by no one.//(Sense alone/has many senses.)" As Velimir Khlebnikov did with *zaum* poetry, Joron employs linguistic devices such as homophony (his trademark move) in a self-canceling manner, his ultimate referent being the chaos his poetics presumes is also cosmological: "As if the totality of all possible statements/formed but a single statement./A self-refuting one." Not all of the poems culled from his seven small-press volumes since 1987 and placed before a new and wider audience in *Trance Archive* are endowed with sufficient syllabic chemistry to alchemize the mystical insights that this theremin-playing adept of Philip Lamantia and Barbara Guest strives to deliver. But in the best of them can be heard an echo of the "Solar cry that according to Copernicus inhabits the center of every voice."

AARON KUNIN'S *THE SORE THROAT and Other Poems* ($16)—his third volume with Fence Books, after *Folding Ruling Star*, his debut volume of poems, and *The Mandarin*, a novel in the manner of Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*—sets out from an unsettling insight into what exactly inhabited the center of *his* voice. Having painstakingly apprenticed himself to an idiosyncratic form of sign language ("technically a binary hand-alphabet… that looks more or less like fidgeting or piano playing," as he explains in a helpful "Note on Method"), Kunin gradually became aware that his compulsive transcriptions of the language around and within him were being supplemented, in "quiet moments when no one was saying anything and I wasn't reading or even thinking," by "short phrases of indeterminate origin"—"It won't be easy and can't be a pleasure," for example—that his hand would uncannily generate all on its own. Attending closely to these unbidden phrases, Kunin compiled an inventory of just under 200 words and set himself the task of inhabiting as fully and exclusively as possible the restricted vocabulary within which his unconscious mind was evidently in the habit of expressing itself. *The Sore Throat* brings this "white noise" phrase bank to bear on two texts, Ezra Pound's "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" and Maurice Maeterlinck's play *Pelléas et Mélisande*, offering emotionally raw, prosodically staccato and altogether estranging "trance-lations" of the source texts' subject matter: literary and political in the case of Pound's 1920 sequence of chiseled quatrains about his taking leave of London and the persona he'd adopted there; libidinal and mystical in Maeterlinck's doom-driven crepuscular tale. Like Notley and Joron—indeed, like all the poets of what Jack Spicer famously called "dictation"—Kunin fashions his art out of messages intercepted "from somewhere else." Are there, finally, any other kind? ■

Steve Evans teaches poetry and poetics at the University of Maine and tends the website Third Factory.

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Founder Fatigue

by ROBIN EINHORN

Revolutionaries
A New History of the Invention of America.
By Jack Rakove.
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 487 pp. $30.

We can talk or blog all we want about the Internet shortening attention spans, the twenty-four-hour news cycle undermining reflective journalism and the printed book going the way of the cassette tape, but Americans seem to have a bottomless appetite for stories of the founding fathers. A historian might have a hard time interesting the public in a serious study of the contemporary Middle East, but disclose some new details about which wines Thomas Jefferson drank, which horses George Washington rode, or which pistols Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr employed in their fatal encounter at Weehawken (yes, the duel, but you already knew that!), and your 800-page tome will be a hit in airport bookstores across the land. Sometimes, with a lot of skill and some luck, you can even interest the fabled "general reader" in some serious historical analysis.

There seems to be no danger of Americans succumbing to founder fatigue. Whether we idolize them, demonize them or treat them as ordinary people with virtues and flaws (and good luck with that, as the scolds will brand you a blasphemer, apologist or both), this market appears to be inalterably bullish. And why not? Twenty-odd years ago, there was a bumper crop of earnest scholarship in sociology and other disciplines about the values that constituted the American "civil religion," defined as a kind of nationalistic ethical creed with a vaguely Christian accent and epitomized by the 1952 words of President Eisenhower: "Our form of government has no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith—and I don't care what it is." Today, however, in a political culture that compels us to take or leave specific Christian doctrines, it's looking like founder worship is all we've got left—complete with its own schisms, heresies and excommunications. Because Jefferson expressed some religious skepticism, the Texas public schools now limit the contexts in which he is studied. In the revised curriculum standards adopted in March, Jefferson was dropped from the list of figures who "inspired revolutions." Discussion of his presidency and leadership are presumably still acceptable, though that pesky Declaration of Independence remains problematic. "The Laws of Nature and of Nature's God" indeed!

Asked about the Texas curricular reform on the radio recently, Jack Rakove, a professor of history and political science at Stanford and winner of the Pulitzer Prize in 1997 for *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution*, dismissed it as "completely nutty." I agree. Many other historians have responded differently, with solemn warnings about the dangers of politicizing the past. This response is understandable in an intellectual climate in which Glenn Beck can aspire to be the nation's history teacher. Still, it is hard to reason with the loquacious charlatans and artless believers who have offered themselves up for the ridicule of American humorists from Finley Peter Dunne in the 1890s to H.L. Mencken in the 1920s to the tag team of Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert today. Rakove's new book, *Revolutionaries*, is a little too highbrow for Beck's market share, but it may give the book-writing popular historians (the David McCulloughs and Doris Kearns Goodwins of the world) a run for their money.

Revolutionaries tells the story of the American Revolution by narrating the experiences of particular historical figures in what is often deeply engrossing detail. We learn about the origin of the Revolution by getting to know John Adams, about the war through a focus on George Washington, about the framing of the Constitution through James Madison and so on. Rakove uses these stories to make a series of arresting observations and one very big argument: the way to understand the political history of the Revolution—or, for that matter, any political history—is to pay close attention to events as they unfolded for historical actors in real time. The key to this history is not ideology, though Rakove definitely thinks some ideas were more important than others. Nor is it economic interests, though these also plainly motivated certain actors at certain moments. What matters most is the particular situations historical actors confronted and especially the ways they perceived them. Rakove never surrenders his critical distance, but he enables the reader to peer at particular situations through the eyes of his subjects.

The situations are often very complex, as real human situations usually are. Rakove tells us, for example, about John Jay stationed in Madrid and then Paris, navigating the diplomacy of the Revolutionary War and ultimately helping to wrest a favorable peace treaty from the British without alienating the French. Jay had to deal with the mutual loathing of Benjamin Franklin and John Adams as well as the contingencies that made diplomacy complicated: the changing instructions of home governments and the amount of time it took instructions to reach envoys, which depended, in turn, on who could carry letters to which destinations and what weather conditions speeded or slowed shipping. The accidents of individual health also mattered, along with the fact that "Paris in the 1770s was as full of spies as Cold War Berlin"—the kind of telling observation Rakove sprinkles throughout the book to bring his story to life. By combining vast amounts of detail with such pithy summaries, *Revolutionaries* draws readers into the thick of the action.

This method can seem a bit strange at times. Robert Morris, the Pennsylvania merchant and Revolutionary financier, makes an appearance as "Bob," while John Laurens, the idealistic and headstrong heir to a massive South Carolina slave-trading fortune, is usually "Jack." Without doubting for a moment that the friends of Morris and Laurens called them Bob and Jack, I still found Rakove's informality of address jarring. But his method also pays substantial dividends. He lets us watch British Gen. John Burgoyne march toward his disgrace at the battle of Saratoga, in October 1777, as Washington and other Americans undoubtedly saw him. Burgoyne was a "fop" who did not travel light. His army carried "a few dozen wagons" for his "wardrobe and larder, and a German marching band, complete with trumpets." He also brought his mistress, though his retinue was modest compared with that of the leader of his German mercenary corps, who had his wife and three young children in tow.

Burgoyne's army marched south toward Albany and the Hudson River as half of a two-pronged attack; the other prong was formed by troops under the command of Gen. William Howe sailing up the Chesapeake Bay toward Philadelphia, Howe hav-

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ing decided to scuttle the original plan to assist Burgoyne by pushing north up the Hudson. Instead of ferrying down Lake George, Burgoyne and his army spent twenty-four days slogging through dense forest in midsummer. American forces did everything they could to slow them further, aided by "battalions of patriotic mosquitoes." These delays not only enabled Washington and Congress to resolve a dispute between the Northern generals, replacing Philip Schuyler with Horatio Gates, but also added critical strength to the Continental army as "a flood of New England militia, fresh from the harvest," arrived to meet Burgoyne's miserable ("hungry, cold, and soaking wet") troops. Hence Saratoga, the turning point of the war, where Burgoyne surrendered an army of 6,000 men. With the French persuaded that the United States was viable as an ally, victory was only a matter of time.

Military history is often written in this manner, with the narrative shifting among the various participants watching one another and adjusting to changing circumstances with more and less success. The more significant payoffs of Rakove's method are apparent in the chapters on political history. The fact that the Virginia delegation, and especially James Madison, arrived in Philadelphia on time in the spring of 1787 while others dallied, Rakove argues, probably made it possible for the Constitutional Convention to succeed. While the Virginians waited for their colleagues to arrive—George Washington was particularly irate about the delay—they met for a few hours each day to frame the Virginia Plan, which would guide the convention and shape its debates. "Had the other states been punctual, the convention might well have meandered into discussing general goals and principles or naming a committee to shape an agenda before finally getting down to deliberation."

But the most striking—and most significant—payoff is Rakove's account of the origin of the Revolution. The colonies joined together to fight for independence from Britain, he explains, not because they objected to taxes or had forged an identity as "Americans." It was not because they had developed radical new ideas about liberty, equality or monarchy, and it certainly was not because a habit of conspiratorial thinking led them to sniff tyrannical threats in every breeze. The colonies rebelled because of the very real tyranny of the 1774 Coercive Acts, themselves the result of a specific sequence of events. The Tea Act of 1773, intended as a corporate bailout for the East India Company, generated protests in most colonies. Most of the colonial governors kept the peace by refusing to allow the tea ships to drop anchor, in effect siding with the protesters against the king and Parliament. In Massachusetts, however, a unique sequence of events had led Governor Thomas Hutchinson to decide that provoking a confrontation was the best way to deal with the protesters. He got the confrontation he wanted in the Boston Tea Party. When George III, Lord North and other British leaders reacted to the Tea Party by passing the Coercive Acts, they made a colossal mistake that transformed a prosaic political struggle into revolution and war.

There were five Coercive Acts, and two were especially significant. One abolished all representative political institutions in Massachusetts; the other blockaded the port of Boston in an effort to starve the town into submission and, especially, to compel it to pay for a very expensive cargo of tea. The Massachusetts Government Act and the Boston Port Act were not liable to misinterpretation, in Massachusetts or the other colonies. Nobody needed a "Tea Party" ideology to interpret them or the British Army that was occupying Boston as tyrannical. Even if the Massachusetts colonists were notorious hotheads, which they certainly were, their soon-to-be compatriots recognized that a British administration that would punish Massachusetts with such ferocity would do the same to them in an analogous dispute. And so assemblies up and down the Atlantic Coast scrambled to mobilize, equip and train their militias, provoking additional confrontations with the governors who represented British authority in North America.

Oddly enough, Rakove barely mentions another event that has become a set piece of this narrative: the recruitment of about 800 enslaved African-Americans into the British Army in what was known as the Ethiopian Regiment. The Virginia governor, Lord Dunmore, had fled from Williamsburg after a skirmish with militia prompted by his effort to impound the colony's gunpowder supply (not long before, the Massachusetts governor, Thomas Gage, tried the same thing, causing the outbreak of fighting at Lexington and Concord). From his ship, Dunmore issued a proclamation offering slaves their freedom if they fought with the British. White Virginians were aghast:

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armed African-Americans meant serious danger, and liberated African-Americans meant the loss of valuable property. When the British "excited domestic Insurrections among us," as the Declaration of Independence would soon complain with reference to this incident, they pushed more and more white Virginians into the struggle.

Rakove has little to say about slavery generally. Most of what he does say is organized around the quixotic effort of Laurens, several years later, to persuade white South Carolinians to create their own African-American regiment by promising to emancipate the recruits. This discussion of slavery oriented around Laurens, and a similar discussion of racism oriented around Jefferson, fits with Rakove's goal to explain the Revolution through a collective biography of its leaders. Rakove does not pretend to be synthesizing the whole national experience, and when slavery shapes the actions of his major actors, he explains the details in the matter-of-fact language the actors would have used (or actually did use) themselves.

Revolutionaries, in other words, is a founding fathers book. It is rich in detail, written with verve and very smart about early American politics. Rakove writes about the founders with sympathy but not reverence. His "great man" approach may strike his colleagues as old-fashioned, but if Rakove can take a sizable swath of the public where he finds them, show them the founders as real people in motion instead of as Olympian gods and teach them that history is the story of what actually happened instead of a fund of morality tales or precedents for present-day action, he will have accomplished a valuable public service. I want to see *Revolutionaries* in the airport bookstores, and I hope that Houghton Mifflin Harcourt does the job. ■

More Than Has Met the Eye

by BENJAMIN PALOFF

Polish poets publish too much. Such a generalization flirts with heresy in a country with so many lionized bards, and where for much of the twentieth century state censors steered extraordinary poets into long careers of writing "for the drawer." There are certainly exceptions to this overexposure, including Adam Zagajewski, Wislawa Szymborska and the late Czeslaw Milosz. But some of their colleagues haven't been so prudent. In Poland it is not uncommon for a poet to "debut" (their term, thankfully, not ours) by the age of 25 and to crank out a book every eighteen months thereafter. One consequence of this prolificacy is the staggering volume of garbage that floods bookstores, including many D-list poems by A-list poets. Another is that if a poet aspires to be noticed—and poets, like children, want desperately to be noticed—he or she often becomes a rejectionist within a generation, publicly denouncing predecessors, rivals and younger upstarts.

Janusz Szuber and Ewa Lipska generally stand to the side of Polish poetry's warring aesthetic camps and scripted career moves.

WLADYSLAW SZULC

Janusz Szuber

They Carry a Promise
By Janusz Szuber.
Translated by Ewa Hryniewicz-Yarbrough.
Knopf. 89 pp. $26.

The New Century
By Ewa Lipska.
Translated by Robin Davidson and Ewa Elzbieta Nowakowska.
Northwestern. 85 pp. $18.95.

Though of the same generation as the "New Wave" that emerged from the late 1960s and included Zagajewski and Stanislaw Baranczak, Szuber and Lipska rarely share their peers' lyrical sensibilities or political preoccupations. *They Carry a Promise* marks the first substantial publication of Szuber's work in English; but for a couple of slim volumes released in England, the same is true of Lipska's *The New Century*. Both books therefore strike an essential, if not always consistent, blow in favor of a broader appreciation of individual poets from Poland and against the romanticized view of Polish poetry as a resolute "witness to history" that still overshadows the publication of translations of Polish poetry in the United States.

The seventy-nine poems in *They Carry a Promise* typically play with two contradictory modes. They are often descriptive, sketching the details of an image or event in quick, efficient gestures, not unlike *ekphrasis* as it was practiced by early Greek rhetoricians. Or else the poems are so deeply invested in existential imponderabilia, in the dream of perfect self-equivalence, that even their discoveries sound tautological, as if the whole point of leaving home were to come back. Occasionally Szuber attempts to hold these two modes in perfect balance, breaking the surface of things only to be deterred by their impenetrable totality. When he fails—as when any of us fails repeatedly at something truly ambitious, before we surprise ourselves—tragedy becomes farce, and the poem, a parody of its thwarted vision. "The Fog" opens beautifully against "the silhouettes of the mountains/As if they were just forming out of dull matter,/Saturated with light at their frayed borders," only to crash into tedious solipsism:

> To tell myself to myself
> As if I were those whites, browns,
> blues, and blacks.
> Savoring the sweetness and
> bitterness of sounds.
> Accepting pain and love and death.
> To tell not myself to not myself.
> Or to dream myself. To be dreamed.
> Without myself in myself.

Readers sensitive to hearing "myself" repeated seven times in seven lines—and there is a great deal in postwar American poetry to make that sensitivity acute—will find Szuber testing their patience. Indeed, the risk posed by tautological phrasing is that the repetition tends toward nullity, if not always of thought—"He was born and then/It was too late for anything/But acting himself without himself within himself"—then at least of sound—"I am I but why am I this 'I.'"

One reason Szuber is consistently impressive in Polish, despite the English rendering of "The Fog" into something akin to the graduation speech of a high school valedictorian, is the degree of emotion, rhythmic delight and intellectual provocation he can pack into a phrase. Granted, the English is what we have before us, but

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it is worth noting that there are genuine rewards behind the breakdown of lyric sensibility more than occasionally evident in the selection, arrangement and translation of these poems. In the book's most arresting poems, the perspicacity of Szuber's vision is astounding; the timing of his redirection of our focus is perfect; and Ewa Hryniewicz-Yarbrough's inventiveness in reproducing the poet's richly alliterative, assonant lines deserves applause. As the title of one poem suggests, we sense that we have "Everything Here":

> The gray building of a pig farm,
> inside
> Grunting and growling, almost
> black doughy mud
> Through which they slogged, in
> squelching rubber boots,
> That wet summer abounding in
> frogs, they worked
> By accident on this farm, not quite a
> farm, in a poor
> Region of dwarf pines and junipers,
> Partly withered, at the edge of sloping
> Pastures and soggy meadows, over
> which,
> Once or twice a week, border patrols
> flew
> In the potbellied dragonflies of
> helicopters, everything here,
> Despite the emptiness stretching on
> for miles,
> Barren, nobody's, was filled entirely
> with itself,
> And when you sat over beer under
> the roof of the makeshift bar,
> Without the need to prove anything,
> All this had something in it that
> could never
> Be trapped by metaphor.

The poem emphasizes that the poem doesn't include everything in the scene, that there is always "something…that could never/Be trapped by metaphor." There is nothing special in admitting the inevitable failure of language to grasp what it seeks to represent. In Szuber's most moving poems, however, failure does not merit pity but rather the celebration of the wondrous elusiveness of a world too abundant for our efforts to rein it in with words and indifferent to our unavoidable need to do so. Thus another barroom poem, appropriately titled "Tautologies," smiles upon the objects on the table, "bread, salt, bones, and a crumpled tablecloth./In the unsaid between 'already' and 'still,'/They also were what they were, *idem per idem*: the rose of identity."

Wonderment in the face of "the rose of identity" is an old saw of modern Polish poetry, and readers of Szuber's poems in the original will almost certainly hear him in dialogue with other prominent voices, notably those of Milosz and Zbigniew Herbert, and challenging their dreams of pure essence. In "Pebble," one of the most renowned poems of the twentieth century, Herbert declares, "The pebble/is a perfect creature//equal to itself/mindful of its limits//filled exactly/with a pebbly meaning." In "Secondary Exhibitionism" Szuber responds: "It's not true, I thought for the hundredth time, that only/Stones are sealed in their perfect skin." "And so it befell me," Milosz writes in his prose poem "Esse"—the title is the Latin verb "to be," and the root of "essence"—"that after so many attempts at naming the world, I am able only to repeat, harping on one string, the highest, the unique avowal beyond which no power can attain: *I am, she is*." Here's Szuber, in "New Labors":

> For hours I can contemplate a ladle,
> Its triumphant, inaccessible *esse*,
> Which can't be possessed with
> words.
> Different from my *I was*, *I am*, *I will*,
> It arouses disinterested admiration
> and humility,
> Respect for things existing outside me
> And amazement that I've been given
> exactly *this*
> As an advance payment for
> something or a promise,
> Representing as it were a timid
> introduction
> To private metaphysics.

Lacking an introduction, notes or editorial apparatus of any kind, *They Carry a Promise* shrouds allusions and echoes that a reader new to Szuber or contemporary Polish poetry might benefit from having revealed. This is a shame, because the allusions and echoes are an important aspect of Szuber's engagement with the life of poetry in his home country.

I met Janusz Szuber nearly a decade ago in Lesko, a tiny town in the remote southeast corner of Poland. He was just then on the cusp of the public and critical acclaim that followed his writing quietly for the drawer for nearly forty years, though not because of a government blacklist. Szuber's lack of notoriety is a less familiar story. Unlike Lipska, Zagajewski and Baranczak—poets who, following the protocols of their political and literary milieu, were still in their early 20s when they started to make a permanent mark on public discourse—Szuber was mostly invisible to the centers of literary life, in no small part because of his difficulty getting around. At the same time as his friends and classmates were publishing their first books, Szuber was starting to feel the effects of a severe form of arthritis that has long since left him wheelchair-bound in a country where basic handicapped access, let alone a serious public discourse on disability, remains largely absent.

I mention this not to announce that I was the band's biggest fan before its album went platinum but simply to stress that there was never a time when I didn't associate Szuber's poems with the body that produced them. Szuber has said in interviews that he has little interest in making disability a major theme of his work: he has no wish to indulge in what he identifies as the Polish national mania for self-pity. In the American conversation in which this book wishes to take part, however, body politics play a meaningful role in the body politic, even without being the center of attention. The poet Robert Creeley, for example, who lost his left eye as a child, rarely wrote about his limited vision; the attentive reader simply remarks the peculiarity that "eye" appears in the plural in his poems only when he is speaking of other people. Yet the observational logic that characterizes his work is inevitably framed by his range of vision, the word of "the poet's eye" made flesh. Creeley half complains of this limit in a 1951 letter to Charles Olson—"I sometimes think I read, literally, with this one eye"—while another friend and colleague, Charles Bernstein, uses it as the central metaphor of a sharp, brief essay on Creeley's self-regard, in which "eye" and "I" are nearly interchangeable.

Most Polish poets, by contrast, have treated the body as a dirty secret, one that needs to be dressed richly in spiritual or philosophical language before it can appear in public. Szuber doesn't conceal his physical condition, but he doesn't advertise it, either. Once aware of it, a reader is likely to see the poet's body represented, discussed, interrogated or allegorized throughout this work, which might seem to predetermine our experience of the poems. The editorial decision not to reveal these details, however, keeps the reader in the dark regarding an important aspect of the poems' genesis. At the same time, it squanders an opportunity to expand our conversation on the meaning of disability.

This is not to say that Szuber's circum-

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spection is unwarranted: if there is anything that Western readers look to Polish poets to provide, it is the tale of sociopolitical woe. This has made for a peculiar microeconomy within the global literary marketplace, one in which the English-language audience remains willfully ignorant of Poland's oddball punsters, like Miron Bialoszewski, and the entire generation of poets that followed Szuber's own and took Frank O'Hara as their patron saint (some critics have taken to calling them "O'Harists"). Most troubling is that this narrow vision of Polish letters suggests its ideology of envy, with the Western reader unabashedly covetous of someone else's richly marketable history. As the nineteenth-century Polish poet Cyprian Norwid wrote from Paris, where he lived in bone-crushing poverty and grew increasingly deaf and blind, "Emotion travels unironically/The paths another's pains have blazed."

Such is the path taken in roughly half of the poems in *The New Century*, a selection of work from the six books that Ewa Lipska churned out between 1999 and 2007. Unlike Szuber, her coeval, Lipska has been an influential presence in Polish literature since the 1960s and has spent long stretches of her career in Austria, Germany and the United States, working variously as an editor, teacher and diplomat, and producing a body of work that swings jarringly between lyrical brilliance and moralistic pandering.

Both extremes are amply represented in this shambolic volume, a collaborative editorial and translation effort between Robin Davidson, an American poet, and Ewa Elzbieta Nowakowska, a Polish poet. The confusion begins with the front matter. In contrast to *They Carry a Promise*, which refuses to contextualize Szuber's work in any meaningful way, the poems in *The New Century* are preceded by an embarrassment—if not a "muddle"—of riches. First comes Lipska's "The Absurdity of Beauty," a witty, lively essay that nevertheless bears only the loosest connection to what follows. Then comes a full three pages of acknowledgments, an Academy Award's worth of private gratitude made public. Following that is Davidson's introduction, a hodgepodge of sententious blurbery ("Poetry is not collective life. It arises from solitude; it cannot be planned") replete with a two-page bibliography of mostly unrelated texts. Finally, and inexplicably, there is a separate introduction by Nowakowska, who in three pages elegantly conveys everything that should have been said in the preceding twenty. This is a compact little book with an awful lot of filler.

The same is true of Lipska's poems. Her most affecting and delightful mode is a quick, spare line that can be both observational and gnomic, not unlike American Imagism, as in the opening stanza of "The Holy Order of Tourists": "Landscapes doomed in advance to success./Devotional seacoasts./A crowd of practicing believers." And here is "Dead Stop" in its entirety:

> When in the wee hours
> you were stuck at a dead stop
> a train whistling along the dark
> rainbow of a bridge.
>
> Today I just want to tell you
> that the bedside lamp from your
> room
> was promoted to star.

The syntactic oddity of the first stanza, with its omission of an active verb, is the translators' invention, but it works, properly conveying the uncanniness of a personal tragedy greeted with wistful regard. Similarly, the strangest poems in *The New Century* move fast, requiring and rewarding repeat readings, and are quite comfortable with their reluctance to connect the dots, as if the poet has absented herself for a time, as she literally does at the end of "2001":

> 2001, dear Mrs. Schubert, is not
> only the beginning
> of the new century, but also the
> number of my imagination.
> As you know, for some time now my
> fiction
> has resented my flirting with reality,
> consorting with useless time.
> I therefore inform you that the dead
> season is coming,
> which, as usual, I am spending
> on the short-term list of missing
> persons.

For those who prefer their dots connected, there are plenty of poems that do so, as well as exasperating meta-reflections on word craft, which appear with numbing regularity: "A beginning carpenter of words"; "I feel the dampness/of his words"; "they are woken at dawn by poetry's attendants/for a duel of words." But the more self-consciously explanatory the poems become, giving themselves over to a narrative conceit, the more likely the spare scaffolding afforded by a reticent line wobbles and collapses. Consequently, the decision to limit the selection of poems in this volume to those written over the past decade is puzzling, all the more so in light of Davidson's claim that doing so showcases "the trajectory of Lipska's thought into the twenty-first century." Drawing on Lipska's entire career would have produced a denser concentration of her best work, supplying a fuller sense of that trajectory.

Still, a book that has something for everyone is not without advantages, the main one being that it fosters the sense of range often so difficult to convey in a single volume. Szuber and Lipska are worthwhile poets not only because they help compose a diversity of Polish poetry that has been largely invisible to American readers but also because their work is diverse in itself. Without a taste of the variety that constitutes a career, it is impossible to see the translated poet as anything but a collection of greatest hits. Milosz once suggested that Western maps of Eastern and Central Europe might as well bear big white spots and the Latin inscription *ubi leones* ("here be lions"); these new publications suggest that it might finally be time to start filling in the blanks with names. ■

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A NEW *NATION* UTAH YAHOO GROUP has been created at groups.yahoo.com/group/thenationutah. To join, contact Sam Evans, (801) 791-8089 or sameritech@yahoo.com.

A NEW MADISON (WIS.) *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP will be meeting one Sunday afternoon a month. Interested in participating? Contact Helen Aarli, h.aarli@earthlink.net or (608) 244-0787.

PSYCHOTHERAPY

SAN FRANCISCO PSYCHOTHERAPIST. Anxiety, depression, relationship issues. Near USF. Sliding scale. (415) 289-6990. paulabranchholt.com. Paula Holt, LCSW.

CHICAGO PSYCHOTHERAPIST, twenty-five years, all issues, including depression, anxiety, relationships, creative blocks. Sliding scale, insurance. Deborah Hellerstein, PhD. (312) 409-9516; thearapyinchicago.com.

REAL ESTATE

LEFT COAST, US. Work with The Realtor Who's on Your Side. Norma J.F. Harrison. (510) 526-3968. (866) 264-9029. NormaHa@pacbell.net.

SANTA FE: PROGRESSIVE REALTOR® seeks same in clients. Peter Kahn, Santa Fe Realty Partners. (505) 690-4840 cell, (877) 982-6207 toll free, or peter@peterkahn.com.

Events

NATIONAL

A New Era Dawns

■ As we face mounting world crises, British author Benjamin Creme offers good news. Throughout history enlightened teachers appear to help humanity take the next step forward. Now, led by Maitreya, the World Teacher, they have returned to inspire us to create a new era based on sharing and justice, where all people have food, shelter, healthcare and education as basic human rights. Free talks by Benjamin Creme in LA & SF. Info: Share-International.us, (888) 242-8272.

Economy Connection

■ War and global capitalism. Unemployment and recession. Wealth, poverty and inequality. For speakers and resources on these and related topics, contact Economy Connection, a project of the Union for Radical Political Economics. We can provide speakers for formal or informal events sponsored by community groups, unions, high schools, colleges or political organizations. soapbox@urpe.org; (201) 792-7459. Join URPE: urpe.org; (413) 577-0806; urpe@labornet.org.

The advertising deadline for Events is every Thursday. Rates: $210 for 50 words; $260 for 75 words, additional words (above 75) $2.00 each. To place an ad, call Amanda at (212) 209-5414.

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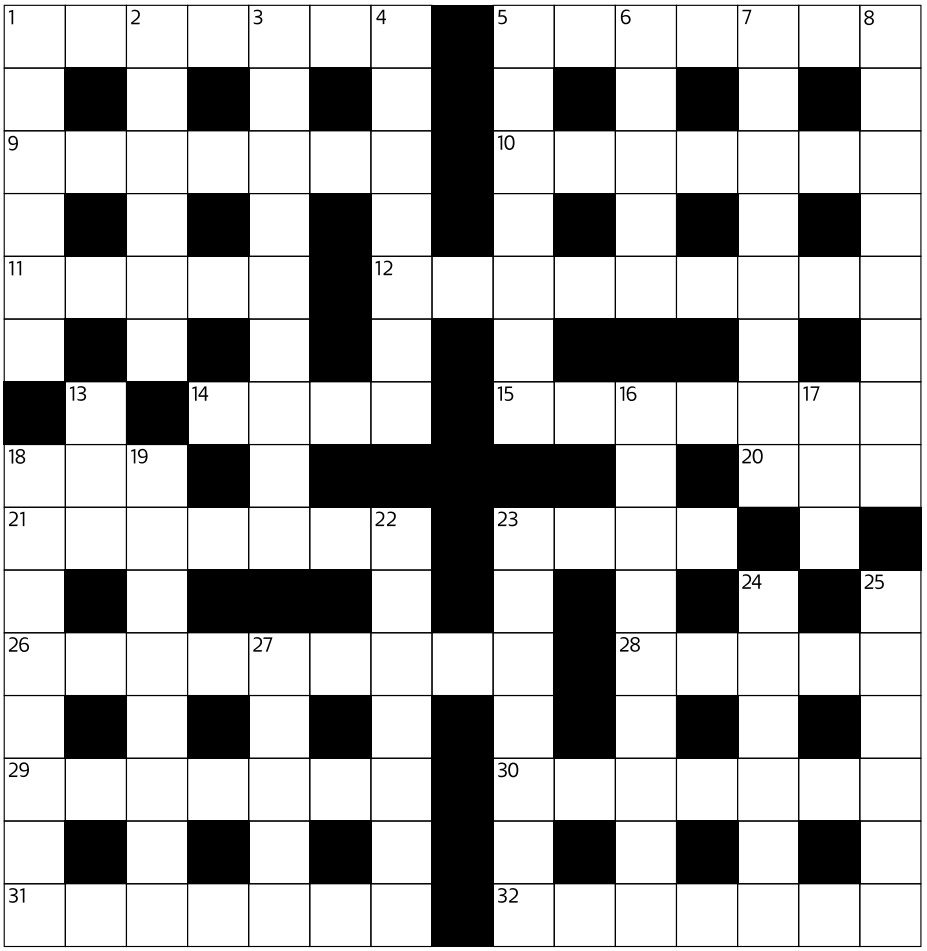
Puzzle No. 1603

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 and **23** down Everyone healthy and moral—but there may be more to come! (3,4,3,4)

5 Two animals representing British character? (7)

9 Christian tongue. (7)

10 Grenville's ship. (7)

11 It's obvious if it were on H-Row it would be upset. (5)

12 Religious assembly and shrine, possibly. (9)

14 and **23** Meadows can—well, can be rented. (8)

15 One type might be a bit like a large number in an irritant. (7)

18 Fish, in general, coming back. (3)

20 and **21** One might be good at making sacrifices, but insecticides may have made it outdated. (3,7)

23 See 14 across

26 How the office basket might be marked without any indication of time under water. (9)

28 See 1 down

29 What Africanus was to Scipio. (7)

30 Confess, it's a little different from an uptown circle. (3,2,2)

31 Seems an odd shape in a body! (2,5)

32 Such waters are reputedly still in the extreme. (7)

DOWN

1 and **13** down, and **28** across One does not necessarily have a poor vocabulary. (1,3,2,3,5)

2 Goes on some trees. (6)

3 It probably involves passing, in one sense. (9)

4 Plaguey things! (7)

5 Filled with melancholy and melodramatic energy. (7)

6 Reception on landing? (5)

7 A personal problem of a cad and ruffian? (8)

8 Verdure. (8)

13 See 1 down

16 Tolerance we perhaps were given by our parents? (9)

17 Like 18 across, one type is slippery. (3)

18 Bad times, consumed by what may be only guessed at. (8)

19 Similar to wisteria. (8)

22 Possibly reunite the train. (7)

23 See 1 across

24 One might get you most of the way home. (6)

25 Corset which would have to be fitted for such as 22. (6)

27 Lots of cities sometimes have them, but they're gloomy. (5)

This puzzle originally appeared in the October 18, 1975, issue.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 1602

H	O	T	T	I	N	R	O	O	F	■	O	F	F	A
U	■	R	■	I	■	E	■	F	■	A	■	R	■	R
N	E	U	T	R	A	L	■	C	O	C	T	E	A	U
G	■	S	■	O	■	I	■	L	■	C	■	L	■	G
A	S	S	N	U	G	A	S	A	B	U	G	I	N	■
R	■	E	■	N	■	N	■	Y	■	S	■	M	■	F
I	T	S	A	D	A	T	E	■	C	A	T	O	N	A
A	■	■	■	F	■	■	■	■	■	T	■	■	■	C
N	O	F	A	I	R	■	P	O	S	I	T	I	V	E
S	■	L	■	G	■	E	■	D	■	V	■	N	■	C
■	R	E	T	U	R	N	T	O	S	E	N	D	E	R
F	■	E	■	R	■	E	■	R	■	C	■	I	■	E
E	S	C	H	E	W	S	■	A	L	A	B	A	M	A
E	■	E	■	S	■	C	■	N	■	S	■	N	■	M
T	I	D	Y	■	B	O	T	T	L	E	C	A	P	S

The Nation (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for the second week in January, and biweekly the third week of July through the second week of September) by The Nation Company, L.P. © 2010 in the U.S.A. by The Nation Company, L.P., 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. (212) 209-5400. Washington Bureau: Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Washington, DC 20002. (202) 546-2239. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Subscription orders, changes of address and all subscription inquiries: The Nation, PO Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235, or call 1-800-333-8536. Publications Mail Agreement No: 40041477. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Bleuchip International, PO Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2. Canada Post: Publications Mail Agreement No.: 40612608. When ordering a subscription, please allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of your first issue and for all subscription transactions. Basic annual subscription price: $79 for 47 issues. Back issues $6 prepaid ($8 foreign) from: The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. The Nation is available on microfilm from: University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Nation, PO Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235. Printed in U.S.A. on recycled paper.

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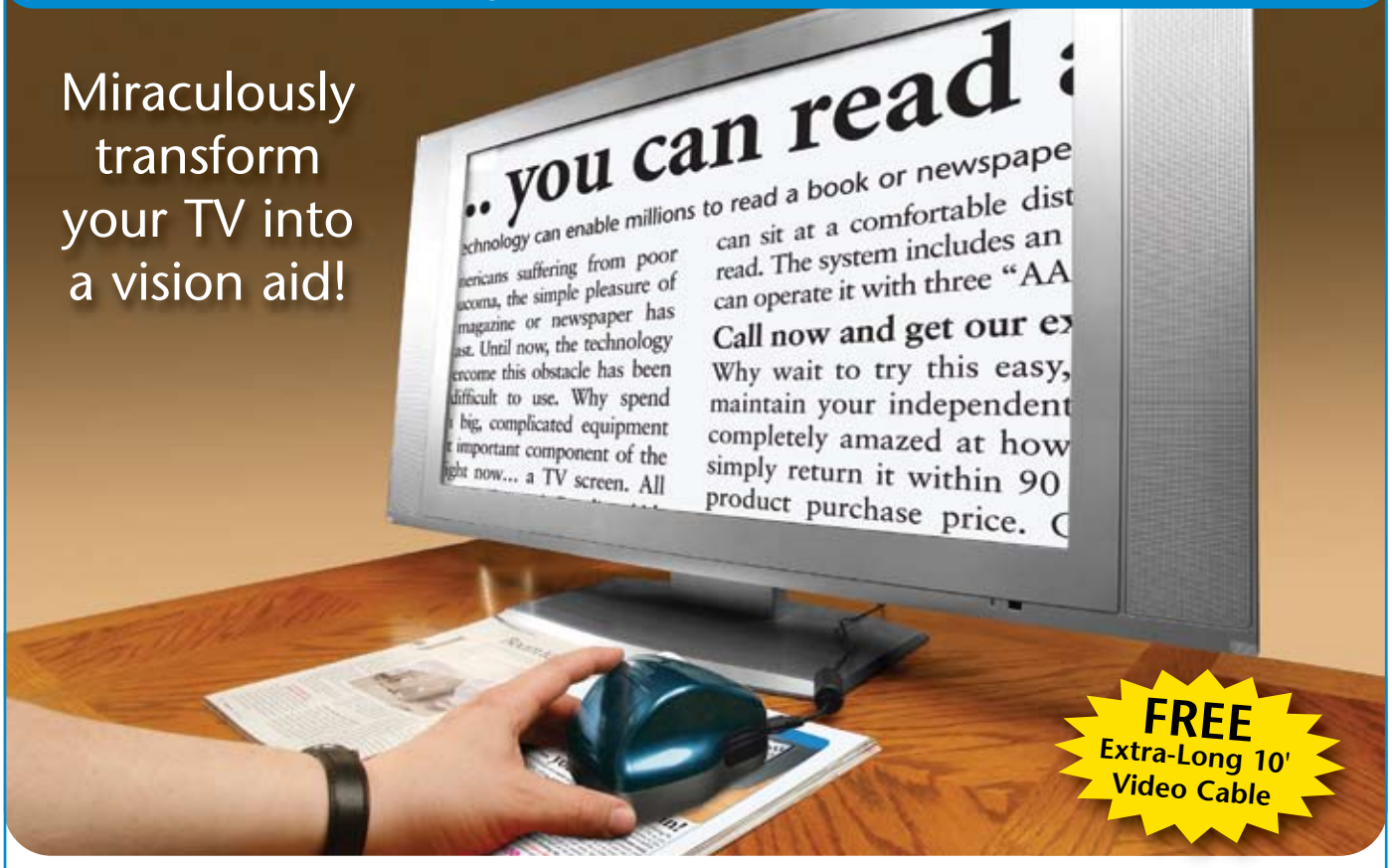
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